

# AINSLEE'S

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scene*

*that ends this eventful history"*

# AINSLEE'S


VOL. XV.

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## THE WHITE WASP

By Robert E. MacAlarney

T was in the Torrances' box at the Metropolitan Opera House, the first act of *Parsifal* ended, that I looked halfway across the horseshoe and saw her—after two years. The chant of the Knights of the Grail still throbbed in my brain, and in my ears was the threadlike music of the angels' voices:

By pity 'lightened  
The guileless Fool—  
Wait for him,  
My chosen tool.

Memory and the quick warming into glow of the dimmed lights made me frown and wish to rub my eyes. Once I lowered my gaze and stared deliberately into the pit, raising it again as deliberately, and another time appraising the boxes' contents. There was no mistake, then. It was really she. Lethwin, however, was not with her, and of this I was glad. For I knew that without his presence she would—she must—for at least a moment call me to her side. And this she did, without sign, save for an almost imperceptible start as her eyes met mine.

To me it was as plain as if she had bent her superb shoulders and had cried to me through the chatter and the orchestra noises. And yet I knew that

neither good old Torrance, sleepy at his post, nor his keen-eyed wife, a society sentinel in much jet, with feather fan and nodding aigrette at "present arms," divined the reason for my slipping away between the curtains.

There was no momentary forgetfulness of poise as Mrs. Lethwin gave me her hand, and I went through the civility of a word with the woman beyond her at the rail. The name of the latter I did not hear, nor did it matter; for she turned from us a second afterward and busied herself with a Westerner's inattentness of lorgnette, transfixing in turn the various sections of the auditorium.

Fair—I use her pet name to myself sometimes even yet, and why not? There is none the wiser for it—talked to me over her shoulder, and as she did so the more than twenty-four months that had slipped away jerked past me one by one, as you turn back the hands of an eight-day clock, with a pause and a rattle for the hour-strike at each numeral.

"When I saw you I knew that you would come," said Fair.

"And before you saw me I knew that when you did you would call me across the house," said I.

"It was my surprise," Fair hesitated.

"It was a call, very clear and very sweet," I corrected. "I heard it."

The girl nodded. "You are right,"

she agreed. "It was a call—to you. I couldn't help giving it. Strange, isn't it, that out of all the wide houseful, you should have been the only one to listen; that no heads were turned to discover who was interrupting the *entr'acte*?"

"Dulled ears. I pity them," I made answer.

"The last time we were together——"

I did not let her finish. "Let me do the recalling," I said. "The last time we were together was a troubled memory of a scarlet sunset; there were the black sides of a gashed heap of culm; there was a wrecked automobile, with somewhere near, too near, dead men."

The girl shuddered. "I've tried to forget the worst of it," she said. "Then there was something else."

"I know," said I. "There was the ending of a masquerade for one of us, the betrayal at last of a stupid mummer."

"When it is danger that tears the domino from one's face to betray a hero——" Fair's voice was very low now.

"It was grim enough play-acting at the end," I interposed. "Do you remember how the lanterns twinkled when we saw them coming to look for us?"

"I remember."

"And how long ago the whole hideous afternoon seemed?"

"Yes, I remember."

"And how I told you—it was my last chance for a word—to-morrow you were to be married."

"The next day I *was* married," said Fair.

I found myself faltering, so I said: "You see, my memory is an over-long one. I have not forgotten the breaker country."

"Very few of us ever really forget," said the girl. I smothered the impulse to say forbidden things, while I saw question in her eyes, which scanned my hand fiddling with the awkward book program.

I tossed the pages to the floor, where they lay, a printed blotch against the shimmer of her skirt. Upon the little finger of that hand was a circle of Etrus-

can gold. I turned it around, and there showed, plainly enough for her seeing, a 'scutcheon plate with a crest, and the Fairfax motto—her mother's.

"You will not ask me for it?" I said. "It has been with me a long time, you know—more than two years."

"Two long years," she repeated. "No, I think that it belongs to you now."

"I thank you," said I, twisting the 'scutcheon once more into hiding.

"You earned it," said the girl. "Yes. How you did earn it!"

"As to earning," I began, "there are other things than wages."

"You really should not have come. I am going South again to-morrow, for Christmas. They will not understand," she said, with a nod toward the Torrances.

"They are not very exacting," I made haste to reassure her. How Mrs. Torrance's aigrette would have bobbed had she guessed!

"For Christmas." Imagine what Christmas would be in the South—with Fair. Ah, that hurts. So I set about my going; it was indeed the moment for that, and the industriousness of the fiddlers was warning of the second act.

"By the way," said I, upon my feet, her finger tips momentarily in mine. "I've bought a racing car of my own. I wish you could see it. It would, I think, remind you of the Wasp. I call it the White Wasp II. I like to fancy it the reincarnation of our car."

"Our car," whispered Fair. "Our poor, pretty, wrecked car."

"You are going South to-morrow," I went on. "I do not need to be told not to follow, but if you ever have need of the Wasp—and of me——" I waited.

"Yes, if ever I have need of the Wasp," recited Fair after me.

"You'll let us be of service again," said I, finishing abruptly.

I was still sneering at my idiocy when I bumped against my host outside his labeled door.

"The confounded six-day bicycle show isn't half over yet," he grumbled. "Let's go down to the directors' room and smoke until the flower girls come



on. They say the flower girls are worth looking at."

"I'm due at my rooms—there is a telegram," I said, vaguely. "Anyway, I've got to start early on that Long Island motor-car run in the morning. Say good-night to Mrs. Torrance for me, will you, and explain?"

"The Wasp will break your neck for you one of these days, Billy," growled my host. "And there was to have been some supper after the show. A man can't talk to his wife all alone at supper after a show."

"The Wasp's broken my heart for me already, Sid," said I. "So it doesn't matter about my neck." Little he knew that it was not altogether real jesting. And I slipped past him, down the stairway.

At midnight the Torrances were getting into their brougham at Hector's. At twelve I was sitting, pipe in hand, staring at a snapshot photograph—a stolen Kodak—of a girl in an automobile. She had a pair of shoulders, that girl, and a true eye. From her deftly knotted hair, from her trimly gauntleted wrists that grasped the steering wheel, and the—in short, the girl was Fair.

At twelve Mrs. Lethwin was—well, wherever she was, and is, God bless her!

If only the eight-day clocks of memory never *could* be turned back. But they can be, and sometimes they must be. And as one knows, each time he waits for the hour to re-strike, things hurt. *Don't* they hurt, though?

"They do," all the goblins of remembering whine back at me.

Never mind, chauffeur into the valley of the shadow of defeat. When gears go wrong, there is yet the hand brake for stiff hill work. Jam it down, *hard*—so.

## II.

This is the way it happened. Little did Ned Shackelford; little did I; little did any of the half dozen of us around a trayful of glasses at the Carston Club, reck of what was to come out of a bet recorded in a laugh and the time it took

to scrawl a memorandum on a page torn from the boy's order book.

It was before dinner. The lot of us had unloaded from Shackelford's new machine and my own sixty horse power Fernieux after luncheon at Ardsley. It was Shackelford himself who picked up a crumpled copy of the *Herald* from the leather divan and turned it over, looking for new garage advertisements, I think. Once we heard him chuckle and saw him hold the sheet quite close, as if to make certain of something—the electric globes had not been lighted.

"Look here, you fellows," he said, his finger halfway down a column. "Here's a chance for one of you, if he happens to be a Sherlock Holmes and a *mecanicien* rolled into one. Then he read to us this:

WANTED—By a well-known detective agency, a *gentleman* with a wardrobe, including evening and afternoon clothes. Candidates must be able to handle an automobile. None but good dressers need apply. Address, P. D. A., *Herald* Downtown.

Naturally there was a deal of joking at the expense of the advertisement, as well as some chaffing at the expense of one another.

"It's somebody trying to be funny," suggested Henderson Case.

"I differ with you," said I. "The advertisement seems genuine enough. You can guess pretty well what the initials 'P. D. A.' stand for. There's some game afoot that must be stalked by a man who can go to an afternoon tea and wear his clothes as if he had been measured for them."

"I wonder if society regards *me* as a 'gentleman' in italics?" reflected Shackelford, with a grin.

"Seriously, the thing's interesting," I went on—how vaguely I presaged the interest which was to accrue to the "thing," as I idly called it. "What's more, I'd like to see it through."

"You might fill the bill," volunteered Case, eying me critically. "You can potter some about motor cars. But *are* you a swell dresser? Is he, Shackelford?"

The owner of the car that had taken my dust, willy-nilly, on the way back

from Ardsley, regarded me with disfavor.

"Billy!" he said. "Billy Hosmer earning a day's pay! Why, Billy, you hate work except when you put on a pair of overalls in your own auto shed; and that of course isn't work, but play. Why, you'd even shirk leading cotillions if you had to show a union card before you led your partner out at Cherry's."

"That's all very pretty and pleasantly vicious, Ned," said I, "but I'll do you a special car to the next Harvard-Yale football game for the lot of us, that I could try for the job, and fill it, too, if they took me."

"You wouldn't get it," mused Shackelford. "You'd be turned down fast enough. But if they were hard up—" He paused suggestively.

"I'd take it and see it through," I said. I recall shutting my teeth as I spoke, for somehow the banter had got upon my nerves.

Shackelford fairly leaped in his chair. "You're on, Billy," he cried. "You're on for the football special." He whipped away a leaf from the tray-boy's book, jotting down the memorandum.

"The game's at Cambridge this year, you know," said Case, as we broke up. "And of course we'll wish an extra day or two for golf at Brookline and looking over the Yard."

"Just recall that to Ned, will you?" said I.

Shackelford was waiting for me at the curb as I got into my Fernieux. "Don't do anything silly, Billy," he said. "I'm ready to call the bet off and split the cost of that Cambridge junket. After all, there might be something serious back of that newspaper paragraph."

Something serious. Good Lord! *wasn't* there something serious? Why didn't I meet him halfway, there on the sidewalk outside the club? In that event—well, in that event I should not have seen the White Wasp, and the White Wasp never would have stung me. But then is there not a shred of comfort in nursing the tenderness left by the White Wasp's sting? Sometimes I think there is, but at others—Such as when I looked over the rail of the Torrances'

opera box and felt the months click backward. To be frank, I can't quite answer the question.

My letter to "*Herald*, Downtown," went out in the midnight mail. I dropped it down the hall chute myself at the bachelor apartment house I lived in. As I heard the paper rasp between the metal and glass I had the sensation of an adventurer at the borderland of things possible. I remember having some difficulty getting to sleep that night for thinking of these.

An answer was upon my breakfast plate two mornings afterward. My intuition had not been wrong. The crisply business-like communication was from a private agency of detectives quite as well known as the Central Office at Mulberry Street. They addressed me by a name not my own. This I had seen to, the hall clerk being instructed that any letters to "Mr. John Walcott" should be delivered in my care. From the look on the boy's face as I gave him this order, I saw he marked me down in the same class with Chatswold, on the seventh floor, who sent out magazine manuscripts under a dozen pen names, and as often got them back. The agency's letter made an appointment for the next morning.

I was there punctually. They took me in through a confusing half dozen of green, swinging doors; had I been a criminal under apprehension and left to my own inclination, I could not have found my way out again. And they finally sat me down before a solid-looking man with a short, gray beard and rather sleepy eyes, who apparently recognized my name and nodded to the others to depart.

"The thing *is* important, then," thought I.

At the great detective's bidding I recited my qualifications—having rehearsed my speech more than once on the way downtown. I did this glibly, possibly too glibly. But when I was asked for a sketch of my antecedents and to furnish proof of my movements for the last week or two, I halted.

"That's something I don't care to discuss," I said. "I'm ready to work for

you if you think I'll do. But you'll have to take my word for the rest of it."

"I think I understand, Mr. Walcott," remarked the detective. Then he laid a hand on my shoulder. "My boy," he said, "this is a thing of sober moment. That advertisement you answered wasn't a joke by any manner of means. I've interviewed one or two persons this morning before you came, who evidently thought it was. The errand I want a man for is one upon which I can't send anyone from the office. I don't happen to have a man left just now who will fill the bill. The only member of my staff who can spend a week at a really sporty house party and not give himself away the second day out, is in Chicago."

"A house party?" said I.

"He's in Chicago," said the detective, not noticing my interruption. "And he's needed there badly, too. I heard from him this morning by wire, and I'd buy his double pretty quick if it was in the market. What I need a man for now is, so far, only trouble on paper, but it's likely to be real trouble before we get through."

Now I *was* keen for the job. "I've got the clothes and I can handle a motor car," said I. "In fact, I'll take my own car along if you need one."

"H'm!" said my opposite. "I thought so. You've had something to do with firearms, too, I suppose."

"I qualified for my marksmanship medals two years ago, and I haven't forgotten how to pull a trigger," I replied.

"Squadron A, revolver targets?" said the sleepy-eyed one.

"You've guessed it all right," said I. "Maybe you've guessed the rest."

"No," he said. "No, my boy, I haven't. But maybe I've seen some one like you on horseback during the Brooklyn trolley strike. The bricks flew pretty thick, didn't they?"

"Tolerably thick," said I. "If you go making inquiries at the armory, please don't—"

"I won't," replied my interviewer, with a laugh, and again his hand was laid on my shoulder. "My boy," he said, "no matter whether you butted into this thing for the fun of it or not, I believe

you'll do, and I'll take what I don't believe on faith."

"Thank you," I said.

I was in for it, and what is more, I was glad of it. After all, there might be things as exciting as breaking auto road records.

Not very long afterward I was on the Black Diamond Express booming off into the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania, with a ticket for Wilkesbarre in my pocket and two suit cases. Smoking on the deserted observation car as we rattled along, I took out the letter of introduction my chief had given me, and tried to make myself believe that the adventure was really begun.

You see, I was en route to a week's house party as a prelude to a wedding—a wedding in a country mansion that, I was told, might have been lifted and put down, say, in Tuxedo or Morristown, and yet which was set as a gem in a gutter, sole scout of architectural refinement in a compound of Lithuanian and Russniak hovels; instead of river and the swelling green of landscape, beyond the handful of lawn and garden that had been wrested from a grudging, carboniferous soil, there remained only a vista of dead trees, miners' cabin "patches" and the gaunt, upreared bulk of coal breakers, standing like gigantic spiders, legs deep in the culm piles.

"It's a whim of the old gentleman's only daughter," the detective had said to me. "She's twenty, and fresh from five years abroad. She got off the steamship ready to marry a man who'd been picked for her husband before she put on long skirts. She insists upon having the wedding in the house she was born in, although the town's turned foreign in the last few years. That's what's made all the trouble."

The rest of the story I had gathered was this: John Maxwell—that isn't his real name—had come over from England a generation before, with a younger son's patrimony and the outlook upon the world that goes with twenty-five. And in the course of time he'd bought some anthracite land well off from the railroad, between Hazleton and Wilkesbarre, and had married a Southern girl

bringing her to an Elizabethan home that even then looked strangely out of place, although the running sores of the colliery refuse were as yet remote.

Then had come the discovery of new "red ash" veins and the building of a rail spur from the weighing yards to ship the output to the main line. With the "red ash" came the necessary hordes of Huns and Poles, who tacked together their board sheds wherever they might, and drank "polinka" on Saturday nights in flimsy barrooms that flared with the Magyar coat of arms. With the saloons came, too, the inevitable plank church with its crude, kalsomined crosses and images; also there came great wealth for Maxwell, who each year intended to move away from the clanking of his mine cars, but as often found that he was needed a bit longer, and stayed.

Not until Fairfax—the mother's name they had given the daughter for her own—was fifteen, did the coal magnate take wife and child away from the breaker settlement. Then he left the two in the south of France and came back to his superintendents. In the five years since, there had been a convent and a Paris season for the daughter, and the arranging of a marriage with a man from Mrs. Maxwell's own Virginia county, who had spent a month at Veule les Roses, with them.

"Maxwell's tired enough of the mining game now," my preceptor had told me. "He's disposed of all his colliery interests, leasing them to the Ontario & Western on royalties, and he's shut up the house at Ashton and been living at his Philadelphia club. He expected to give his daughter away decently in a quiet little Episcopal church in Germantown and send them abroad for a year or two before they went back to Virginia to keep house. Lethwin—the man his daughter's going to marry—makes believe practice law down there, as near as I can make out. That was what Maxwell, what any father who'd got to the point of being carelessly comfortable, would feel like doing. But the girl, it seems, wants a look at the old house. She says that the five years in France and the finishing touches along the

boulevards, with trips to the Louvre tucked in"—from the offhand way my preceptor talked, I fancied he'd taken a whirl at cross-the-ocean travel himself—"have made her hungry for a sight of the old place. She wants to be married at the house she grew up in. So the marrying's going on there a week from Friday. Your train will get you in about twenty-four hours behind the first lot of bridesmaids and ushers and a few inevitable chaperons."

But all of this had not utterly enlightened me, and I had said so.

"Wait a bit," the detective counseled. "I only learned about things myself the night before I put that advertisement in the *Herald*. I don't read the society column in the papers—the police court news is more in my line; and I didn't know about the approaching wedding. But I had a telephone message from Maxwell, at the Holland House, about seven o'clock. He wanted me to come up at once, and I went. I'd met him in a business way two or three years before at one of those perennial anthracite strikes, when the locked-out Hungarians were writing him nice little letters threatening to burn down his breakers and flood his shafts. I had a score of picked men looking after the Ashton collieries for a month or two—sleeping with guns in the weighing sheds and the tool houses, to be handy. Maxwell got sort of chummy by the time the thing was over. And the check he mailed me when I came back to town showed that he was fairly satisfied with the way we'd looked after his property. So, when I heard his voice over the wire with 'Come up to the hotel and put me right,' I went.

"We had a corner table in the café, with a double barricade of screens. He didn't waste any time before he pulled out of a leather case some microbic correspondence containing curiously vile language, with an occasional skull and crossbones inked in with red. Between the decorations and the filth there was trouble, I saw plain enough.

"'It's Black Tony,' said I, after I'd had a look at the scrawls. 'I'd have known that fist anywhere.'

"'You're right,' says Maxwell. 'Black Tony it is. I felt it in my bones that this wedding business at Ashton would produce some sort of a boomerang from our little fox hunt of three years ago.'"

It appeared, from what my preceptor told me, that Black Tony had been the one particular star in the hell-raising line during that last strike, and that they'd run him out of the country with a file of Scranton militia and a couple of coal company police for escort until the next steorage steamer was warped out of her dock in Philadelphia. It had been, as nearly as I could make out, a case of shanghai for Black Tony, who was properly peevish over it, and was last seen dancing up and down the side, promising to come back and practice vivisection upon the tenderer portions of the coal policemen's anatomies. But he'd been blotted out—Maxwell had hoped, for good. And now Black Tony's buoyant resilience had astonished him.

"It's too late to call off the wedding arrangements," Maxwell had declared, when this advice had been given him. "I'd have to explain to Fair and her mother, and no matter if we held the ceremony in Kamschatka after that, they'd be nervous for all time. We're going down to-morrow; the house has been opened, the servants are all there, even the dominie's packed up to come, and the decent miners—there are some of them left—are getting ready for a whole holiday that I've promised 'em, with plenty of stuff to drink wedding healths to anyone who gives them the least excuse."

Black Tony's note, divested of its excursions into the violent parts of vengeful vocabulary, demanded five thousand dollars, one-third gold and two-thirds notes, to be tucked under a pile of rotted coal cars at the bottom of "Red Ash Number Two's" biggest culm heap. If these were not forthcoming, he intimated that there would be an unexpected punctuating of the marriage service. Both Maxwell and my preceptor had instinctively understood their correspondent to refer to giant powder. All

of which is not rice for tossing at joyous brides and bridegrooms.

There had been an hour of talk behind the café screens. At the end of it Maxwell had said: "There'll be plenty of my own men to look after the grounds and the house. Jackson, my superintendent, will see to that. What I want is a man who can tag around my daughter in an unobtrusive sort of way for that whole week—a man who can talk and act like the gentlemen she's been brought up with. I'll see to the introducing—the son of an old friend and all that sort of thing. And besides wearing his clothes as if he were used to them and not making any breaks in his talk, he's got to know how to handle an automobile."

Here enter the White Wasp. For that was the name of a machine which had come from France with Fair and her mother, being pure white, as the name implied, and a sweet thing for speed—Maxwell was a bit of a motor-car enthusiast himself—the bride's father had said.

"Lethwin's no hand with a machine," he had declared. "And I won't trust Fair with the French lay figure in goggles and leather that she seems to have bought with the car. Fair can't be told that she mustn't scurry over those coal roads—she'll want to see the fall leaves and breathe the air from some of those hills. Send me a man with decent grammar, stylish clothes and a cool hand for steering—I can fix it so that Lethwin won't be jealous—and I'll take my chances."

### III.

So here was I, off on a harum-scarum jaunt—a chauffeur, a male chaperon, a centurion of carking care, all rolled into one; and as I contemplated it all and myself, I rather realized, rolled flat into one. But I was eager for it, and in my eagerness I was conscious that what I wanted to see most was the White Wasp—this sweet thing of a French car that had warmed even Maxwell *père* into a momentary glow of enthusiasm when he mentioned it—of course he had paid the

bill. Gasoline to be sure, I fancied it. And luck of all lucks, was it a Fernieux?

I could see it as I lay back in the leather of my smoking-compartment chair. Opposed cylinders, automatic valves—and would it have the jump spark or the make-and-break variety? As for gears—let me see—I rather fancied the clash transmission and low-water alarm.

"Wilkesbarre!" yelled the porter, my bags in his hand and peering in from the aisle.

I was a trifle dazed as I clambered down the steps and watched the observation car whicker over the switch catches past me into the darkening distance. Foolishly—my mind still upon the White Wasp—my gaze strained off the station siding for an automobile with leather spotless even to the mud guards.

"Mr. Walcott"—a whip-corded groom was at my elbow.

"Ah," thought I, "they have managed to have that telephone talk with Maxwell, then."

"I was told to say that if you have not dined——"

"I have," said I—"on the train."

"This way, sir, then," said the groom, and taking my luggage, he piloted me to a light road wagon with a pair drawn up alongside of the hotel busses. The suit cases were flung in behind and covered with a plaid wrap, then buckled tight.

"The road is a bit rough here and there, sir," said the man. "And we've a good twelve miles to Ashton."

We were off through the square with the old-fashioned courthouse, past the Sterling Hotel and over the iron bridge that spans the Susquehanna. I drew in the keen air with real pleasure. This might have been the foothills of the Adirondacks as far as atmosphere went.

The groom was a business-like fellow, and the horses kept him fairly occupied. Why not try my first lines? "After all," I thought, "this is so far an easy rôle I'm playing."

"I thought Mr. Maxwell might send the automobile," I began.

"There's only one machine down, sir," said the man. "It's Miss Fair's—they

call it the White Wasp. It's a racer, a new foreign machine. They say no one can handle it but the Frenchman Miss Fair brought from the city. He sprained his wrist yesterday helping unload it, and it hasn't been out of the shed once."

"Bravo, Maxwell *père!*" I said to myself. My chief had told me the old coal magnate was a crafty one. I tried to figure what sized *douceur* this Henri or Raoul was getting in addition to his wages.

"If I may say so, sir," said the groom, maneuvering the pair skillfully past the snorting steam pipes of a culm washery—we had struck the breaker country well in now—"Miss Fair's very concerned about your coming. Mr. Maxwell has told her that you are an expert on racing machines. Mr. Maxwell refuses to let any of the other gentlemen at the house take out the Wasp, for he thinks they're not up to racing gears."

I bethought me that Maxwell perhaps had been laying it on a trifle thickly. Was I up to the latest in French gear? Well, unless there had been some new wrinkles since—"Doesn't Mr. Lethwin motor?" I asked.

"He—not at all, sir. He's a Southerner, sir—the kind that rides to hounds. He hates autos just as much as Miss Fair likes 'em." The man hesitated as if he would like to finish.

"Yes?" said I.

"To be plain, sir," he went on, "I think Miss Fair is up to running the Wasp, sir. The Frenchman told us at the stables that she could handle the machine as well as he can, but somehow her father is afraid—maybe he's got a reason. There's no denying it, Miss Fair's been getting mighty anxious to try that machine on some of these hills."

"Work for me," thought I. Who and what was this slip of a girl of twenty with the auto fever in her blood, despite a shower bouquet and wedding frocks to think of? Would she be a jewel of a girl to match this jewel of a machine? *Would* she? Ah, well, we should see. And running over these things in my mind, I saw the scarlet sky-streaking melt into snuff gray, bared here and there with the grimed frameworks of the



breakers—their rows of windows catching a last thrust of sun lance, and flashing as myriad, dotted beacons into the dusk.

Through many a miner's "patch," past as many shanty Magyar drinking dens we drove, before we neared the Maxwell place. We took the last hill at a gallop. A queenly location this house must have possessed when the English coal hunter had first deposited his household gods, long before the shaft spewings had engulfed his very front lawn. There was a brilliance of many lights as we turned sharply to the right and drew up at a *porte-cochère* with a vista of startlingly wide veranda, screened by ropes of creeper not yet frost nipped—a blackish green wall against the illumination.

"Just nine, sir," said the groom, leaning forward to look at a leather-sheathed clock on the dashboard. "We're on time. Mr. Maxwell will be in the library. He'll wish to see you, sir."

I had a glimpse of a pair of low apartments to the left, one of them apparently a sort of reading room, for shelves ran around the walls, almost to the ceiling. There was a great deal of feminine laughter within, the authors of most of it sitting here and there in evening frocks, while more or less heavy youths in dinner jackets lumbered about in their efforts to meet the laughing ones' sallies halfway. Somewhere at hand, but with the piano masked from seeing, a vigorous amateur musician was strumming college songs. All this I saw and heard as a butler led me off to the right into a real library screened by thick, red-stuff hangings from the main hall. I felt the warmth from some snapping sticks on an old-fashioned bricked hearth as I entered; it was by no means too early for a wood fire, and I was chilled by my long ride.

"Mr. Walcott, is it not?" I heard, in a vigorous voice. As I took the outstretched hand of my house-party host I deemed him sturdy enough to repel Black Tony's machinations single-handed, if need be, including nitroglycerin or dynamite; and I could not help marveling that he had sent for help. John Maxwell was an Englishman who would

have been an inveterate cross-country rider upon his native heath. He was of middle height, but very heavy-shouldered, with that preponderance of beef above the breastbone that is almost universal among men of his nationality, who have halved their time at least evenly between boating and grinding at Oxford or Cambridge. And while he pumped my fingers up and down very precisely, neither more nor less often than a genuine welcome demanded, I thought: "I wonder, old fellow, if you know what sort of a broken reed they've shipped you on from town."

"Have a highball and part of the fire," he invited, pushing a huge denim-cushioned lounging chair toward me. I accepted both—Maxwell did not drink mediocre Scotch whisky, I discovered—and over our glasses we regarded one another.

Beyond the red-stuff hangings the laughter and the piano tinkle were unceasing. I'm a Harvard man myself, and at Cambridge, Massachusetts, they don't go in for some of the college trimmings practiced where water is fresher than the Charles, but I recognized what they were singing. It was the Princeton "Step Song," that the seniors consider their very own, and chant on summer evenings, pipe in hand, with the under class men grouped far enough away to be properly respectful. I divined that a handful of Lethwin's old college mates were on hand to give him a wedding send-off with a dash of commencement flavor intertwined.

I listened for a while and then, Maxwell still sipping, I volunteered: "My chief said——"

"Yes, I know," Maxwell broke in. "I've had him on the telephone. He told me you were a new man, but one upon whom I could rely."

"I can shoot and I can handle an automobile," I said, beginning to catalogue my accomplishments as I had done for my detective preceptor that morning. "And I may add," I went on, "that I've brought two suit cases full of clothes."

"You're the son of an old friend of mine, that's all you've got to remember," said Maxwell. "Everyone's too



busy to bother about details of ancient history, and they'll take you for granted, all of them except Fair, perhaps—she's very keen for a girl, and you'll have to be careful when you're with her. Your room is next to mine on the second floor. There's a telephone to the lodge gate by my bed, where the superintendent's men can keep in touch with us, if need be. The whole thing looks ridiculous, I suppose. Maybe you and your chief both think I'm hysterical in taking these absurd precautions—although the man that sent you here saw enough anthracite to know how ugly these foreigners can get when they're put to it. But I tell you, Walcott, I believe from the bottom of my soul that Black Tony means to keep his word, if he can make trouble for us."

"Have you looked for him?" said I, curious to know if I had the professional detective's routine interrogation well simulated.

"Hunt for him? Good Lord! what's the use?" said Maxwell. "Have another highball. Look for him? There are a hundred tunneled hovels hereabout where he could lie all day and sneak out at night, looking like any other cursed Pole or Hun. These shanty settlements are regular rabbit warrens. They build them that way because the mining population here is fifty per cent. recruited from riffraff that has had to flee their own shores for some crime or other. No, the only thing we can do is to wait, pray for luck and shoot the twisted-faced devil on sight, if we've the good fortune to run across him. He's not pretty to look at."

"Why not pay him the five thousand and trap him afterward?"

"The scoundrel makes that impossible. He stipulates that the money must be placed under that rotten mine car by Fair——"

"By Miss Maxwell?" said I, astonished. The detective hadn't told me that.

"Don't you see?" said the coal magnate. "He wants to make things doubly safe. If we're there, he'll have the girl to kill if we touch him."

Past the hangings came the tap of

small heels. The curtains parted. "Oh, I thought you were alone, papa," I heard some one say.

When I looked at the girl; saw the coppery gold of her hair meeting the proud poise of a neck that might have been the model for the Milo's; as I watched the play of the small hands busy with some trifle of her frock, the one thing I longed to do on the instant was to go outside, hunt up Lethwin among the group by the piano—I fancied he must be there—and throttle him. Curious thing, that, when the feeling hits you offhand. You see, it was experiencing the White Wasp's sting before I had seen the Wasp. Yet it hurt just as much afterward. It still aches.

"This is Mr. Walcott, Fair," Maxwell said.

"I am glad," said the girl. "I was afraid you weren't coming, for papa wasn't sure. Now I'll be able to show everyone what my new car can do. I shall expect you to play chauffeur most of the time, Mr. Walcott. I've promised so many people rides."

"I'm quite ready," I returned. "May I ask what car you have?"

"A Fernieux," said Fair.

"Ah," said I, with a relief more real than either of them guessed. "It's the best of them all. It's an old friend. I've one of them myself at home."

She clattered her pigmy heels over the parquet floors a moment later to join the others. Maxwell turned to me before he led me after her. "You're all right, Walcott," he whispered. "You'll do. That bit about owning your own automobile was a good starter." He chuckled. "You may not know, my boy, but they're somewhat expensive luxuries. I paid twenty-eight thousand for that car through my Paris bankers." Again he chuckled. "I'll have to break it to the other girls that you're a millionaire. They'll be trying to net you before you get back to town."

Good old Maxwell! That was the only time he showed a trace of coarse grain through it all. And how was he to blame? After all, I was only a detective, and a detective can have no sensibilities that squirm at odd moments.

## IV.

The bridesmaids and the ushers—even the chaperons—were well enough for a house party—a week's house party. For a fortnight, now, I might have wished the collection picked over and sorted out. Lethwin puzzled me. He was a handsome fellow, certainly not past thirty-five, with an easy manner—he did not, of course, know what Maxwell and I knew—and seemed to be popular alike with the men and the women. But I went to bed that night, after a final cigar with Maxwell alone in the library again, feeling that somewhere in this bridegroom's make-up was the streak of yellow. And—it was a dog's act to plan, but no matter—I was mad enough to feel that I should like to bring that streak out—for Fair to see—before the wedding.

There were four days of careless jollity for us all. None knew of the night-patrolled lawns save two of us. At the end of each day Maxwell would send a report to my detective chief in New York over the library telephone.

I heard him one night. "He's all right, I tell you. He can handle an automobile as well as his grammar, and by day after to-morrow we'll be through with the thing. Black Tony's not in evidence and the letters have stopped. Maybe he's been scared away." I laughed as I slipped off upstairs.

I was due for a ride with Lethwin and Fair that last afternoon. We had planned to gather fall branches on a ridge five miles in toward the mountains, for decking the house. The rehearsal was to be after dinner, and I was to charioteer the bride and bridegroom to Wilkesbarre in the Wasp the next afternoon, in time to catch the five-forty-five for New York.

The week had slipped around in a flash. I had played my part well, indeed better than good old Maxwell knew, despite the fact that it was like a man's assisting at the purchase of the necessities for his own obsequies. Sometimes at night I'd get up and switch on the electric globe at my dressing table, staring at myself in the glass.

Was this really I, and had I made a bet with Ned Shackelford a few days before? And was I going to look on and see a girl I had learned to love—what a short, short lesson it took me to learn that!—married to another man, standing the while tongue-tied—a hired detective? No matter how foolish and silly the thing sounds as I write it down here, it isn't a circumstance to the oddity of the thing as I lived it out. I was a third person sometimes—sometimes a fourth or fifth person, it seemed to me, regarding myself in the Jekyll and Hyde personality of Billy Hosmer and John Walcott, alias Old Sleuth, house-party-plain-clothes-man. It was in this frame of mind that I went out to the garage.

On the veranda I met Fair. She was ready for our trip in her gray dust coat and veil—thank Heaven she never would wear goggles—and an absurd pair of gray gauntlets, the sight of which caused me to fight down the wish to gather those small hands in my own and murmur things to them.

"Where's Lethwin?" I asked, looking around for the absent bridegroom—you see, I *was* getting on with them all if I could be that offhanded after a week.

"Jack's having a little talk with papa," she said. "I told him to meet us at the stables."

Henri—his hand had grown better by now, but his occupation was for the time being gone—rolled the White Wasp down the slanting platform of the garage as we came up. What a beauty the car was! If there be automobile ghosts, that motor must haunt the Ashton garage now even as its memory haunts me. When I got back to town I disposed of my Fernieux; and it was not until later that I came into possession of the car I call the "White Wasp II." How old Maxwell would chuckle, perhaps gasp, if he knew that I had the duplicate of the twenty-eight-thousand dollar machine which he last saw only as hopeless junk, and yet regarded as a good investment. But all that's not for here nor for now.

There she stood—the Wasp—her lines as true and fine as the cup defenders we

Americans brag about to our English cousins. The gear body was lower than the average French machines—the trace of the real racer that the Fernieux never loses, no matter if it is built to order for fussy old ladies. Everything, from the grease cups, the armored wood of the tonneau, and the brace of acetylene lamps at the sides, looked *good*. Oh, she was a sweet car and no mistake.

Fair patted the white leather cushions. "Isn't she a dear?" she asked. "I wouldn't have my wedding ride in a stuffy old carriage for anything. You must race us all the way to the train, Mr. Walcott."

"Your chauffeur, at your service," said I, grinning to see the jealous roll of Henri's eyes.

"I shall be altogether different from what I am now," Fair went on, laughing. "You see now I am quite——"

"Yes, you are quite," said I, as I found her pausing.

"Quite an irresponsible girl," she finished. "But after the wedding breakfast, when you twist the steering wheel and send us out from under the *portecoche*, I shall be a very much married person—quite dignifiedly stern and forbidding."

"Stern and forbidding." Ah, Fair, never—no matter how hard you try!

I fancy she saw a flash of what was behind my masking gaze, for she turned again to the machine in her pretty little byplay and bending down to the wheel, she said: "There will be rice, you know—lots of it. I know where they've got it hidden by the stairs, and you must be an obedient wheel and obey your master."

"And I," said I, pretending to talk lightly, but finding it hard work, "shall be an obedient *mechanicien* and obey——"

"Your friend, for always," said Fair. It was a finale to further playing with matches. After all, a woman has an infinite variety of periods to one's conversation. And a period, if I recall my schoolboy grammar, I was taught to regard as a full stop.

Then Henri, seeing opportunity for interruption, stepped to me and put

something in my hand, saying: "A man left it a half hour ago. He would not stop. He could not understand. He was not an American."

Black Tony had re-entered—on time as usual—the day before the wedding. A glimpse of the scrawled address on the paper told me what I held, and I thrust the thing into my pocket with a dark look at the Frenchman for having been a clumsy messenger.

Fair saw both the frown and the soiled paper. "What is it, Mr. Walcott?" she asked.

I took out the writing, and while she waited, Henri looking on, I read to myself what it contained. It was very brief and to the point. The wandering into the byways of profanity had given way to brisk, business-like propositions. This evening was the last one of grace, so Black Tony had sent a final warning. As I stood reading the straggling letters, it was borne in upon me that now this twisted-faced foreigner, this stunted man with rage in his heart and a long memory for the time of his shanghaiing aboard ship by Maxwell's coal and iron police, had done with epistolary temporizing and meant quick action. He meant it even if he had to scatter this gay wedding party with a stick of miner's powder; even if he had to hurt her—Fair.

And so I forgot her—the startled girl in the gray coat and dust veil; forgot her eager eyes and the stupid stare of the French hired man beside her.

"I dare you, you dog—you—you——" but the White Wasp was the only thing before me, its acetylene lamps' burnished brass winking at me. I felt foolish and came to myself. But when my eyes sought those of the girl they wavered. Now the murder was out. What was I, to be hired by a detective bureau for the carrying off of a difficult game? What would Maxwell say? What would—at all events, I had the presence of mind to dismiss Henri, with a whispered word in his native tongue that he must have understood, for he scowled in ugly fashion as he moved away. Then we two—Fair and I—were facing one another. And it was I who was at bay.

## V.

"I'll thank you for that paper, Mr. Walcott," said she.

"I am yours to command in the Wasp, Miss Maxwell," I answered, again putting the paper in my pocket. "But in this matter—if I may be plain——"

"But you may *not* be plain," cried Fair, with a sharp little clicking of her teeth—oh, Lethwin, you married man of more than two years now, do they ever click that way for you? "Whatever that is, it is not for you?"

"No, the letter is not for me," I answered. "But neither is it for you."

"It is for papa," she exclaimed. "It must be what has been worrying him ever since we came. It means an explanation of many things—of strange men on the lawn at night and of my never being left alone. Why, I believe there are hired detectives at Ashton whose duty it is to look after me, to follow me wherever I go."

The grotesqueness of it, her saying this to me and never knowing, made me smile despite the gravity of the situation.

"I am not jesting, Mr. Walcott," she said. "And you—it is presuming for you to laugh at me"—she was sure in the saddle again—"presuming even for an old friend, a friend of a week's standing."

I bit my lip. "Presuming"—blind, foolish Fair!

Then I made a step toward her. I think if she had hesitated I should have taken her in my arms, and no matter if she had screamed, should have done as I did so—lead her within the garage and shut the door after us. Why she went with me willingly, I never knew. There was a heap of carriage cushions in a corner, and light enough for seeing from the watered-glass screen that led into the carriage sheds.

I pointed to the cushions and she sat upon them, while I prayed that Lethwin's talk in the library might be drawn out another five minutes. "Now," said I, "since I've made a mess of things, I shall have to tell you."

Loyal creatures—women. Before I

could go on, she had half risen, with a dangerous light in her eyes.

"Don't dare to tell me if it is anything about Jack. I'm to be married to-morrow."

She was panting, and I could see the pupils of her eyes expand and then shrink to less than normal, and then do it all over again. Well, I made a clean breast of it—save the part about myself. She knew the story entire, except that I was Billy Hosmer, of the Carston Club. When I had done she was gazing, not at the son of her father's old friend, but at a hired detective, John Walcott.

"Poor daddy," she said. "Well, we've had our way, mamma and I."

Was the girl game enough to give me my chance of being set right in the eyes of the two men who had employed me for this venture? I would see. The idea had come to me as she spoke. After all, we might see this thing through to-night, the White Wasp, Black Tony, Fair and I.

"There's a way that has occurred to me," said I.

"Yes?" asked Fair. It was a long, wide chasm between "friend of the family" and "hired employee." I knew it as she looked at me. Miles had somehow got between us in those few moments.

"The man is afraid of the colliery. He says he knows that the superintendent's men are watching it. He gives us until dusk at the crossroad, a quarter mile from the worked-out Nottingham shaft."

"You mean to go?" asked the girl.

"Yes," said I. "You and I."

"But——"

"You and I and the White Wasp," I said. "We'll keep the tryst with Black Tony this night, unless you say 'no.' There are no others who can do it. He will meet us if he sees you've come."

"But you could have counseled this before," said the girl. "I could have had the time for thinking it over. My father——"

"Your father would fear me more than Black Tony, if he heard me giving you this advice," I interrupted.

"Then he would not wish me to go?" She looked at me oddly.

"He would forbid you going, and lock you in your room if you insisted," I answered. "And I should do the same if I were your father."

"You are a very strange man," said Fair. "You come as a guest for my wedding, and I find you are a paid detective, brought here to guard me from a fancied danger. Yet you seek to place me in a danger, quite against my father's wishes, against the wishes of the man who employed you. And I know these things, and yet you persuade me."

"It is to let me get near enough to Black Tony to wring his neck," I explained. "That must be done before to-morrow. No matter how things may have been bungled, all that's past now."

"I wish I knew." The girl frowned. "You've got to listen to me," I cried, roughly. "I'm getting paid for this, but, after all, it's your own wedding, and you're the one most responsible."

Crazily sudden as the idea of going to meet our enemy had come to me, I knew that it really was the only way. Black Tony should have been baited long ago, girl or no girl. Suppose we did manage to block him off until to-morrow by our lawn guards and a show of being ready; there were twelve miles between us and a railroad train to the land of things civilized, and a multitude of murders could be accomplished by a genuinely maddened desperado along that route.

Outside, Lethwin's voice came from the porch. "Fair! Fair!" he was calling.

She raised her head, and looked first at the shut door of the garage and then at me. She might have been referring to Henri as she said:

"But—he?"

"He'll have to go, too," I made answer, with bad enough grace.

I flung open the door, and was busy with the sparking plug while he came over the grass.

Just once the girl bent down, very quickly, toward me. "He—he—mustn't know about what we are going for." She was having an effort to say it, and

I was brute enough to feel glad because of this. "He must not know until we are almost there," she whispered. But I made no sign of having heard.

## VI.

We had a rather silent ride of it to the ridge for our fall leaves. Now and then in the anthracite region, if you know where to travel, you can strike out for a mile or two and find yourself suddenly cut off from rent hillside and the culm—the Pennsylvania coal country must have been God's own country before the blasters and diggers came—in the grip of clean trees and mossed stones. As often as I have explored the tract since then, I have never gotten past a fresh amaze at this traveler's good fortune. And each time I encounter a stretch of unsullied landscape hopelessly imprisoned in a barrier of unsightliness, I marvel at it anew.

So I did this afternoon. With her arms full of the red and yellow branches that Lethwin gathered for her, Fair seemed to have forgotten our talk in the garage. She rallied Lethwin for a lag-gard bridegroom when he did not scale impossible limbs for a snatch of bright color, and she laughed in my face—I standing moodily beside the car—as she made trip after trip to fill the tonneau with her spoil of the trees. Once she ripped a gray gauntlet, caught in a splintered branch, and cast it upon the cushions with the leaves. I took it as she turned. Would she laugh or no, if she knew that I still had it?

But there came an end of their merriment, for I looked at my watch as the shadows lengthened, and, knowing that it was a scant hour before dusk, I called up the hill to them that we must be going. They came running down the slope hand in hand like children. To-morrow they were to be married.

But once at the car, Fair stood looking at me, at us both. The laughter died out of her face. "Now tell him, Mr. Walcott," she said, simply. She was a child no longer. And I did.

He was for caution, was Lethwin. I could have shouted with joy as I heard

him. "The thing's a hoax, a monstrous hoax," he said. "Mr. Maxwell should have been told at once. If there is danger, the superintendent's men should have been informed." As for our keeping tryst with this foreign madman—if he were honestly dangerous, which Lethwin doubted—that was insane. We should return to Ashton, with the White Wasp's throttle pulled wide out.

Fair listened to him without a sign of impatience. And for the life of me I could not read approval or impatience in her gaze. "And what do you say?" she asked, after he had done, turning to me.

"If Black Tony has fangs they've got to be drawn this night," said I. "We may have made hash of the thing, your father, my chief and I. But that's past and done with. There's no chance of trapping the man with spies. It's been tried. He may be a maniac, as Mr. Lethwin suggests, and a madman's cunning is past finding out. I say, Miss Maxwell, that we should go to the crossroads and keep the tryst."

"You're a fool," cried Lethwin. "What have you to say—a hired detective? You are to obey orders."

Murder him? If I could have blown him to bits with Black Tony's giant powder, I should have laughed as I helped gather up the fragments. But the girl turned to me with apology in her look, with something more than apology; and it dawned upon me that she trusted me at that moment; that she would rely upon me rather than upon him—rather than upon the man whose wife she was to be.

"What do you say, Mr. Walcott?" she asked again.

"I have given my advice," I answered. Without waiting for aid, the girl clambered into the tonneau, seating herself among the piled up branches; and what a setting they made for her slight gray figure!

"Man, what are you thinking of?" said Lethwin. "If you come up with this desperado single-handed, what do you mean to do?"

"I mean to kill him—very quickly, if I can," said I. And I did mean it.

"But Fair—Miss Maxwell," he said. "Miss Maxwell is the bait," I explained. "Without her we can't hope to succeed. If she is afraid——"

"I am *not* afraid," said the girl in the automobile.

"It's insanity," reiterated Lethwin.

I was in the Wasp with my hand on the wheel. "Are you going with us?" I called back to him. He sprang into the tonneau, crackling the branches as he settled into the seat opposite the girl. Off we slid to Black Tony, and which one of us knew what else?

I was busy with my plans and with my steering, but I do not think the girl and Lethwin spoke to one another once all the way to the crossroad. When we did catch sight of the rickety old breaker, unused and sagging, with not a sign of even the smallest of miner's "patches"—a deserted coal mine is a foul blot on the landscape—I turned and thrust my revolver at him.

"I don't intend to use it," I said. "And you may need it."

"But you?" cried Fair, through the rasp of the tires on the slaty road.

"Bare hands are best when there is giant powder to be reckoned with," I said over my shoulder. What had I—Billy Hosmer, of the Carston Club—learned about giant powder in the hour?

I halted the car well outside of the limit prescribed by our friend with the letter-writing habit. Very punctilious indeed did I intend to be with Black Tony. It was a dismal enough looking hole. The White Wasp stood in an unused road once occupied by rails for the shaft cars. I turned her around facing the breaker, planning to choose the steep hill between the culm piles if there should be need for quick leaving of my friend.

"Now," I said, opening the door, and helping Fair to alight, "do I understand that I am in command?"

"You are," said the girl, quickly and evenly. So far she had been superb. But would she last? Very few women do.

I waited for Lethwin. "Yes," he said, surlily, to be sure, but it served.

"Then," I ordered, "you stay here



with the Wasp. That revolver is a self-cocker, and it has five cartridges in it. I haven't brought any more along. If five aren't enough, fifty wouldn't be, on an errand like this. Whatever you do, Mr. Lethwin, do *not* leave the Wasp."

He made no answer. He was not even looking at me, but staring at the rickety breaker, at Fair, and fiddling with my pistol.

"Do you hear, Jack?" cried the girl. "Oh, I hear well enough," returned Lethwin. "But, dearest——"

"Now, Mr. Walcott," said the girl, steadily.

"You and I are going a hundred yards yonder, Miss Maxwell," I began. "Will you trust me?"

"I shall obey orders," she answered. "I believe you will do what is best. No matter what happens, remember I believe that."

"I thank you," I said. It was something.

Lethwin stood by the Wasp, watching us. Once Fair turned and waved her hand toward him. Then she turned to me. "What a funny day before one's wedding," she said. She was fighting down the fear bravely.

Black Tony had been exact. I drew out his scrawl to get my bearings. We were at the charred pile of railway ties he had indicated. I took out my handkerchief and waved it thrice in a circle, scanning the path ahead of us. Three times more I waved before the agreed upon signal was given in response—a long whistle. As she heard it, Fair clutched my sleeve, and then, as if ashamed of her starting, drew her hand away.

"Must we go on?" she whispered.

"No, we wait for him here," said I.

Ten, fifteen, perhaps twenty minutes went by, with no sign. Lethwin still stood by the Wasp, bending over the tonneau, my revolver no doubt in readiness.

Ah, the whistle again, this time quite near. Once more my handkerchief waved. Then almost at our elbows—how he crept up to us I cannot imagine to this day—out stepped Black Tony. There was the twisted face, the stunted

figure, that Maxwell and my chief had described to me. It would be an easy neck for wringing, I bethought me, in the wrench of finding him upon us ere we knew. The girl came close to me, and I felt her hand seek one of my own as the twisted face regarded us. She had crept to me as she might have done to Lethwin; and until this thing were over I knew that I was to be as before, with things taken for granted.

"Now you come—hey?" said Black Tony. "For a long while I have wait every day. The money you give it me, hey?"

I drew out the wretch's own letter. "It is here," said I, starting nearer.

"No," snarled the man. "Not you—the girl—she give it."

I saw his glance for a second waver among the weeds to his right. And I divined.

"Give it to him," I said to the girl, handing her the letter.

She drew away. "Oh, I cannot," she whispered. "He frightens me."

"Trust me," I whispered back. "Trust me—Fair."

"You whisper, hey—what is it?" called out the twisted-faced one.

Fair took a step toward him. He took another toward her. I took four in a leap toward them both. Lord! how good it felt to be throttling him there upon the ground. His chokes and gurgles were horrible. Once like an eel he almost wriggled from my grasp toward the right of the path. I pinned him down, my knee upon his heaving chest, while my fingers searched among the grasses.

"Ah, you would!" I cried, joyfully. "You dog!" And I beat him in the face with my closed fist many times.

"Pick it up," I called to the girl. "Carefully. It is the giant powder."

She drew from its hiding the yellow tube, staring at it and holding it at arm's length. Then I found Black Tony's knife and revolver, and tossed them far off into the mine rubbish. He was a little man, and very easy to handle now that he had been hurt. I dragged him to his feet. "I'll take you back as a wedding present to Ashton," I said. What



was the use of killing the snake, now that I had scotched him?

Then there was the report of a pistol from behind us; then another and another. The look of hate in the twisted face before me gave way to one of hideous satisfaction.

"Hey, you!" he gasped. "You think Black Tony one fool—it is the trap. Hey, you!—you die for this—now."

I saw it clearly. Fifty yards above us, hidden in a tangle of discarded mine props, some of Black Tony's friends were firing on Lethwin. As I looked, swinging around with the dog I held struggling to get free, Lethwin's pistol spat three times quickly. It was idiocy. A bullet kicked the black dust in front of the Wasp. "Heavens, if they hurt the car!" I thought.

"We're coming. Stick to the machine," I shouted at him.

He called back something that I did not hear, for my burden was making a horrid noise as I ran, dragging him and shouting to Fair to follow.

"The powder—what shall I do with it?" she called after me.

"Put it down gently and run," I called back. And this she did, gathering the long gray skirts of her cloak about her and being at my shoulder in no time.

I marked Lethwin toss away the empty pistol and look for a hiding place. The bullets—there must have been three men firing—were getting the range now. I heard a metallic sound as they struck one of the car's brass lamps. I must reach it before they hurt the engine. My luggage was getting too heavy for a sprinting handicap.

"Stand by!" I cried to Lethwin. "We're coming." There was a half-filled hole of an abandoned outcrop, which I had marked on the way down. We were by it now, and I shoved the clawing devil from my arms deep into it, leaving him twenty feet below ground and safe for another five minutes.

"Now!" I said to Fair, and taking her hand, we raced for the Wasp.

It was heart-breaking running over the rough ground. I am always in fair condition, but my heart was pounding so savagely that it hurt by the time we

reached the car; and Fair was more than spent. She tottered at the finish, and I took her in my arms in a last desperate effort, lifting her into the Wasp and letting her sink amid the tangle of red and yellow leaves; which, I recall very distinctly, seemed strangely out of place considering that three or four revolvers were sniping at us from the hillock above. Lethwin looked at me almost stupidly as I leaped for the steering wheel.

"Get in, you!" I yelled into his ear. "The devils will be about our ears presently. They may ungear us any minute."

He crawled in after me, and I shot the power on with a criminally jolting suddenness. There wasn't the chance to turn and run by them, for the gang had broken cover now; two were running down the slope firing wildly, and at the hole into which I had pitched my friend of the twisted face I could already see an upraised head and shoulders and could hear choice Hungarian oaths. There lay the rough road between the two huge culm piles, ragged, untried and leading I knew not where. A nettle for choice, of a truth. So I grasped it firmly.

## VII.

How fast we left them behind, the shots and the curses; and after the first few rods I turned to Fair. She was upright in her seat—I had Lethwin in front with me, and he had not spoken—and I bent to my steering again. What was there to say? But believe me, now that we were well out of it, I felt oddly resentful at our luck. For I knew that never again would Fair Maxwell seek for a hand of mine in which to place her own slim fingers, and not another time would I be near enough, when she tottered, to lift her in my arms. It would be the man beside me whose duty that would be. "And then," I remember thinking, "Heaven fend her from seeing the yellow color of him."

Now we had struck the stiff upgrade, and I feared for even the tires of a Fernieux while we plowed into the keen

particles of slate and cinder. Up and over the first rise, and still another. Up, very slowly now, cruelly rasping, and the motors coughing in a paroxysm of pain—up and over again, with my eye on the hand brake if the back-slip should begin—up and over—and God! Black Tony's trap, of a deed! Had I not jammed the reverse on viciously, we should have begun a coast effective enough to have allowed him and his fellows, ten moments later, to have eyed that yawning hole in the side of the "hogback" below us, and to have mourned in their pleasantly demonstrative way the loss of three hostages for the five thousand dollars which the owner of "Red Ash No. 2" had been asked to produce.

There we hung on a very few feet of level ground. The end of a deserted shaft road was in front of us, with its uninviting pit—this had been a horizontal shaft, driven straight into the side of the mountain—and behind us, we knew, came the fox hunters.

There weren't the nerves left in me to jump now. Automatically and steadily I wheeled the Wasp to face us to the rear. In the distance we heard the yelping of the hounds. The huge piles we had shot between loomed up again, as forbidding, I fancy to us, as the Snow Lady and her sister peak must have seemed to Cortez and his weary soldiery when they were piercing the Aztec territory—without motor cars.

"They'll potshot us if we try to run through them again." I found that it was I who was speaking.

Lethwin clutched me. "Do you see what you've done, you maniac?" he shouted in my ear. "She's been the bait you wanted. You've murdered her—maybe worse than that. There's no getting out of this. You've murdered the lot of us. Why didn't you tell the old gentleman to pay over that beggarly five thousand?"

"Jack!" cried the girl behind us. Only the one word, but the brute had done with his shouting and fell to muttering. He was irresponsible with terror and rage. I knew there was little chance for our coming out right now,

but if he made another dangerous move I meant to throw him over the wheel—for the sake of saving her. After that, with him dead and her safe, I'd go back and hunt up that hole at the bottom of the hill or one of Black Tony's bullets, and forget about it all.

Her touching me brought me back. "Why not try the culm heap?" she said. "There are sheds on top. We might hold them off, once at the top."

The culm! By heavens! it was an inspiration. I gave an eager glance at the pair of black hills ahead. The glint of the sunset made each coal fragment sparkle like a precious stone. From where we were it was like judging a track through a distant morass; for we could not know which side was hard or which was soft. It would be chance whatever way we essayed it. Would the culm hold for the grip of tires? Or would the wheels sink deep and leave us hanging for a moment, doomed to an awful, tearing slide backward to the bottom?

I believe I sent up a little prayer before I looked at the girl. Billy Hosmer praying on top of a hill in an automobile would make Ned Shackelford laugh. But it wasn't praying for myself; it was for a girl—a girl that I loved.

"Fair," I said. I was not trying to keep Lethwin from hearing. What are conventions, what are decencies of existence, with the death angel beckoning with her finger just ahead? "Fair," I said, "I'd let Black Tony cut me in a hundred pieces if I could undo this day's work. Lethwin is right. I've murdered you."

"Murdered us all, you fool!" muttered the man beside me. I saw the girl's lips lose their curve and thin to a straight line. She did not look at him. She looked at me. "You played—we played to win, and we haven't lost yet," she said. "I'm not afraid—I'm going to be brave."

Stanch little woman in gray—you couldn't keep up the pretense any longer. You broke down and wept, while the red and yellow branches framed your grief. "To-morrow was to have

been my wedding day," you said over and over again, brokenly, between your sobs.

"Curse you, Black Tony!" I shouted. "Forever and ever. Amen!"

"Amen," mouthed Lethwin, lurching against my steering arm. I shoved him off and pointed the Wasp down hill. "Forever and ever. Amen!" I shouted ahead of us, vaguely hoping Black Tony might hear. "*Morituri te salutamus*" and all of that. I was the madman now; wasn't there the provocation for it? "Mad as the March hare. But it was the best butter," I recall repeating, as we shot down with a whistle of tires. I felt that the Wasp and I were going to make a new hill-climbing record. As far as I know, we hold the figures for culm forever.

There were specks in the distance, our pursuers, of course. But they would be too late. Of the two black hills I picked out the one to the left. Along its side for perhaps fifty yards ran a half-blotted-out track for mules, and from that to the top there was a twisted sort of furrow where once the cable line had grooved to haul the mine cars to the summit before overturning. That was the route for the White Wasp and for us. They saw us now, and I marked them scatter for the sides of the road, ready to wing us, while two of them tugged at the pile of charred ties and began tumbling them into our path. Pile on, you beggars, we aren't coming that far.

Now for it! Slacken her a bit for the last two hundred yards; bless the man that made the Fernieux gears true to a hair. Then widen the throttle-pull a fraction—so, to get the jockeying start I'd used on the Long Island course more than once—it brought me a cup or two, that fraction of clutch—then—

"Fair," I called, "hang tight!"

We hit the rain-worn gully between the road and the coal with a jolt that shook me forward upon the coils and sent Lethwin in a heap about my legs. Then a cloud of cinders which cut and stung our faces; black dust and the screech of heartbroken motors—a tearing, ripping sound as the wheels cut into

the culm. Would they never get a real grip to send us upward? We were slowing as if in a quicksand. There would be little use in throwing on the hand brake this time if we should begin to slide backward when our impetus was done. Now we were through a soft spot, and I knew the tires were fighting for foothold. And, although opening my mouth would, I knew, fill it with whirling dirt, I yelled in exultation; for the mine refuse here, hard packed by the rains of probably a dozen years, was not yielding much more than macadam, and we plowed on with renewed speed.

To Black Tony and his fellows beneath, watching this miracle, we must have seemed like charioteers to heaven, screened behind a black cloud of our own making. It couldn't have been steering; it must have been fate that I should manage to cling to the narrow groove in the coal mountain. This wound us once around and then with a rush spat us out at the summit, begrimed beyond recognition and altogether dazed.

The White Wasp was white no longer. The paint had been torn in flakes from its sides by the cutting particles of slate and coal. But she was still staunch as I put an end to the clanking of the motors, leaving us in a sudden silence which, coming after the inferno of racket, hurt by its very utter lack of noise. But this was not for long. The specks beneath us began to climb where we had climbed, slowly, toilsomely and crouching, while the ramshackle doors of a breaker shed yawned in our faces. I lifted Fair out upon the culm; Lethwin already had stumbled after me.

"We must get the Wasp inside," I said. "We can shut the doors and barricade them with the machine."

There was easy room for wheeling on the little plateau that held us, and I backed the car carefully within the moldered lean-to. Fair came in after I shot the clutches, and Lethwin followed her. He seemed to be coming to his senses, and helped me almost intelligently when I bade him lift the hinge sockets into place. I did not shut off the power an-

other time, and the "chug-chug" of the motors beat in our ears, while the sagging timbers clashed against one another with a grating of rusty iron. They opened outward and swung to with such a rush, when they felt the pull downward and in, that they pinched our fingers horribly. But the very pain felt good, somehow.

It was dark in the shed, save where the fading sunlight oozed through the chinks and loosened planks. I could see Fair crouching against a pile of boards, untwisting her veil, and I heard her cough as the coal dirt was shaken out of the meshes. It was Lethwin who spoke first, and after his first syllable I knew the man had come back into his own.

"This is the end of our ride," he said. "Even you've shot your bolt, haven't you, Walcott?"

"I've shot and missed," I answered. "If it weren't brutally ludicrous I'd ask pardon of both of you. But what satisfaction is it for me to confess that I have been a blind meddler?"

He bent over to the crouching girl and kissed her. "It's all right, Fair," he said. "It's all right, little woman. We'll promise to give them the money and then they'll let us go back home."

"They won't let us go back home without some security," said Fair. "They'll make us leave something behind—and that something will be——"

"You in there—hey, you!" Black Tony's voice floated up over the crest. "You surrender—hey?"

"Get back or we'll shoot," I shouted.

"You no fool—hey, you—you no more gun."

Curse him, he'd seen our revolver where Lethwin had tossed it. A rattling of coal dirt beneath hobnailed boots, and, peering through the planks, I saw as ugly a brace of villains as I ever hope to gaze upon in this life. They scuttled into view, pistol in hand—ay, more than that, for their twisted-faced leader held the yellow tube that he had tried to reach in the grasses beside the path when we last met.

It was the glimpse of the giant powder—the sinking at the heart which

came as I saw it—that drove the thought into my brain. The thing must be done quickly, while they were clustered forty yards off, in a knot at the edge of the slope, planning the finishing touches of their deviltry.

"Stand by to jerk open the doors. I'll take the right one," I whispered to Lethwin. One glance I gave the Wasp, and clamped the steering clutch for dead ahead. She needed only a touch to send her quivering, alive, hurtling into space—but this time guideless.

"The Wasp must do it for us," I explained to the girl. "If they stick together for three minutes, there's a chance."

Lethwin sprang to the other door. He understood. Fair felt the side of the car gently. "Good-by, you Wasp," she said, softly. "Good-by, and good luck!"

"Now," I whispered to Lethwin. The clumsy doors heaved, grunted once and then slid away. I saw Lethwin throw Fair face down in the shelter of the boards as I sprang for the Wasp's power touch. Before I sent the car leaping on its errand, I bent for a second and sighted her as I might have done a rapid-fire gun.

I marked the startled quartet marveling on the edge of the culm mountain. Behind them—they were in clear outline—were burnished clouds and the last licking tongues of a flaming sunset. At the moment one of them raised his pistol raggedly, and as if it had been a starter's get-away shot the Wasp was off.

Fear of what they were facing must have for the moment rooted them to the spot, and thus my aim was made good. With a snort the car threw itself upon the huddled wretches, who yelled awfully—and then yelled no more. It was like hurling railroad trains at cattle. One of the four I saw tossed up and behind the rushing wheels, where he lay still. Another threw himself a hair's breadth beyond the rake of the tires, and, picking himself up, ran like a rabbit out of sight, down the slope. For the remaining two there was a less kindly fate. Black Tony and the man nearest him were struck fairly. I saw the Wasp clutch the twisted-faced one.

It was as if a devil had entered the machine—as if the Wasp knew she was rushing to her own ruin and yearned to drag the authors of it down with her to the end. Black Tony's companion I lost sight of when the machine hit him; I never saw him afterward. But I watched the twisted-faced one raised toward us, half over the steering wheel, wriggling to get free from the deadly grip in which he was held. And as man and car described a terrific parabola over the edge of the shelving culm, a yellow tube waved impotently in one upstretched hand. If he could have hurled it at us in that last moment, the devil would have done it, I knew. Then there was nothing before me on the black plateau—only sheer space, with beyond flaming sunstreaks.

I heard the awful bumping as the Wasp, far out of sight, plowed down to the furthest gully and extinction. I heard Lethwin behind me at the board pile, murmuring things to comfort Fair. I heard the wretch near me, who had been tossed over the Wasp's tonneau, begin to groan. I heard the fellow who had escaped somewhere down the mountain wailing in Polish as he fled. All these things I heard, but I was waiting for something else. It came at last—a tearing, booming noise, with a column of black dirt tossed between me and the skyline. Then—quiet.

### VIII.

When I turned to them Lethwin and Fair were standing by the yawning shed doors. I tried to laugh, but it wasn't much of a try. "There won't be any fall leaves for to-morrow's wedding," I said.

Lethwin came to me and took my hand in both of his. "Walcott," he said, "I don't know what you're thinking about—"

"I'll tell you," I cut in. "I'm wondering how I can persuade my chief that a twenty-eight-thousand-dollar automobile is legitimate expenses."

The man had intuition enough to see there was no talking to me just then.

"Very well," he said. "I'm going across lots for a trap and some help."

"It's all of three miles to Ashton," I remarked. "It's ragged country in the dark. Better let me go."

"We'll need a cart to carry off that," he went on, pointing to the groaning one near the edge. He turned to the girl. "I'm going to the house, Fair," he said. "I'm better at running errands than meeting emergencies." The bitterness of things recalled, then, *had* entered into him. Well, that was something. "Ask Mr. Walcott to stay with you. I'm afraid if you don't ask him he'll wish to go."

"Will you stay?" asked Fair. But she was looking at him, not at me. All the ground he had lost in that last hour had come back under his feet, with more added unto it.

"Oh, I'll stay if you wish it," said I.

"Good-by, then, for a couple of hours," called Lethwin, and he was off down the groove the Wasp had climbed. It was a more widely gouged-out groove now.

"Come," I said, after a while, to the girl. "We'll wait for them below. It won't be so cold down there. I'm afraid you aren't dressed warmly enough to stay at the top of a culm pile after dark in mid-October."

"But the man—that one," she said, looking toward the prostrate foreigner.

"Let him rot there, for all of me," I returned, taking a brutal pleasure at her wincing.

She followed me meekly enough, even letting me help her over the rougher spots. We worked our way down slowly, much more slowly than Lethwin. There was a deep cavern near the bottom that had not been there when we had come up. Black Tony's giant powder had been well capped. I left her for a moment and went close to the gash in the culm. Here and there were bits of the car's wreckage. I found one of the front brass lamps quite intact, not even dented. There was no sign of anything human, not a shred—save—yes, off yonder near the gully something moved.

"Stay where you are," I shouted up to

her. "I'm coming back." I slid down to the bottom. And before the fag end of the sunset had gone I had a last look at the twisted features of our persistent letter-writing friend. He must have loosened his grip on his powder stick and have flung it far from him, or he would have been torn to bits. As it was, he wasn't even bleeding, but dying fast enough. I think his back had been broken by the Wasp's gripping.

He could see me and, more than that, could recognize as I bent over him. His lips moved and I heard him mutter, staring at me with unaltered hate: "Hey, you—fool!" he said. "Hey—you—dam'——" With that, the sunset and Black Tony flickered out together.

A keenly biting wind had come up, and I went back to the girl. She was shivering, and I took off my grimy coat and wrapped it about her, placing her in what lee the black hillock afforded. And there we waited without speech, until bobbing lights a quarter mile down the road we had come that afternoon told us that Lethwin and help from Ashton were at hand.

The girl, seeing them, timidly plucked me by the sleeve. "Before they come, Mr. Walcott," she said, "I want to tell you that you are very brave—that I owe you my life—our lives—and our happiness. Anything I say must sound so terribly clumsy—anything that I can do——"

The bobbing lanterns had put a notion in my head. "No, there is one thing that I wish you would do," I said.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Give me something to remember this afternoon—to remember the White Wasp—and you," I finished.

I think she understood now, for from the hand whose gauntlet she had tossed

away while gathering the fall leaves she readily took the little seal ring that I have now, that I showed her in the opera box afterward.

"I give it to you gladly," she said.

"And I thank you as gratefully," I made answer; "not as 'John Walcott,' detective, but as 'Billy' Hosmer, of the Carston Club." A vulgar thing, of course, to flaunt a club, even the Carston Club, in the face of a girl. But I stood sadly in need of rehabilitating.

She leaned forward, and I was glad that the sun had gone, for it would have been shabby work indeed, my facing her questioning look. "You mean——"

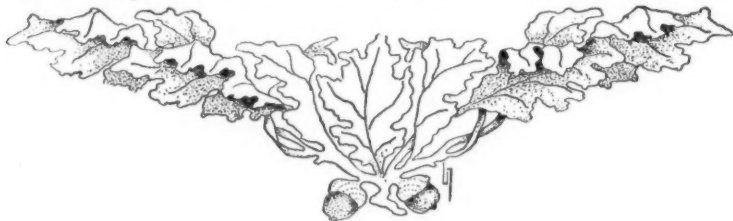
"I'll tell you what I mean—part of what I mean—some other time," I said. And I did tell her—by mail—my one and only love letter—to a bride, not my own—with my heart showing between the lines only. But, then, Fair understood.

It was very cold. The stars twinkled in a sky as black as the culm that surrounded us, and the bobbing lanterns were nearer.

"Listen," she said. Faintly a cheer floated up to us. It was the way the Princeton men give the "locomotive" at a football game. Only the last bit of it reached us—that oddly sounding "Prin—stun—rin—stun—rin—stun-n-n!" It never sounded more strangely than to us upon our coal perches instead of a Nassau bleacher.

I laughed, and my laughter sounded more loudly than the cheering of Lethwin and his college mates. "That reminds me," said I. "I'm going to the Harvard-Yale game next month. It's at Cambridge this year, and I'm going in a special car."

When the lanterns were very close, I led her down the road toward them.





# When the Storm Doctor Blundered

By B. M. Bower

**B**ESIDES," Winifred continued, in a calm, judicial tone, "I have no intention ever to marry. I feel that I have a career which is altogether too important——"

"Huh!"

"Well, what shall I call it—a mission? Perhaps that is a better word—and I do really feel that it is my mission to go and help teach those poor Filipinos——"

"To lie and cheat like good Americans, instead of sneakin' Spaniards!"

"That will do, I think." Winifred sat more erect in the saddle and took to studying the hazy perspective of the hills.

"There are a lot of horses over on that next ridge. Probably Flaxie is with them," she volunteered at last.

The man's keen eyes followed the line of her pointing whip.

"That's a bunch of cattle," he asserted, in no genial tone.

Jed Swingly had never before proposed to a girl, and her calm refusal hurt.

"But I'm sure they are horses," Winifred asserted, sweetly. Winifred prided herself upon her good temper.

"Well, they happen to be cattle." Jed spoke with the crispness of offended pride and with the conviction of long experience upon the range.

"They are certainly horses," insisted she, patiently. "But we'll ride over and settle your doubts." Winifred felt a little tingle of pride at the extreme pleasantness of her tone.

"You can't get over there short of five miles," retorted Jed, brusquely.

"Oh, but I know we can. This coulee ahead isn't very deep, and the sides have an easy slope. At the worst, we can lead our horses, you know."

"No! Can we?"

A man does detest having a woman presume to lead an undertaking obviously within his province—especially when the woman's self-assurance is surpassed only by her ignorance. Jed had ridden every ridable foot of this particular spur of the Bad Lands many times, in good weather and in bad; he knew each treacherous gorge and coulee by heart, whereas Winifred's experience had been confined to half a dozen short rides within the compass of a few shorter weeks.

However, no woman, sweet though her temper may be, can be told these things with impunity.

"Yes. You see, Mr. Bridger and I came this way two weeks ago, and we had no trouble at all."

Jed opened his lips—and closed them resignedly. What could it profit him to tell her that she was mistaken?

She cantered forward blithely to the coulee's rim, halted, looked a moment, and turned to the north.

"Er—I think we crossed a little further up," she remarked.

"Uh-huh—I guess you did," agreed he, cheerfully.

Winifred turned and eyed him sharply, suspicious of his tone; but Jed was examining a weakened fastening of his glove, and she gave over the scrutiny.

She rode slowly along, watching, with drawn brows, for a possible crossing.

But the coulee stretched its deep-scarred arms to right and left, and



seemed to smile maliciously up at her, secure in its unapproachableness. Then Jed, coming moodily after, lost all patience.

"Look here, Winifred, this is plumb foolish. You can't cross here, not if you ride till dark. The only place is two or three miles to the south, and it's a dickens of a job then. And when you get over, you'll just have to turn around and come back, for that's *cattle*. There ain't a horse in sight—and beyond it's so rough a jack rabbit couldn't travel."

Winifred pressed her lips together firmly before she attempted a reply. Then her voice was sweet, it is true, but it was like sugar sprinkled over sliced lemon; the tart lay just beneath.

"Perhaps you are right—about the crossing. Perhaps it is down the other way. You should have told me at first."

She turned and rode back until she faced him.

"You surely ain't going over there?"

"I surely am."

"But look at the weather. Can't you smell the snow in the air?"

Winifred smiled a superior smile.

"No, I cannot. I wasn't aware that one could smell snow. And the weather bureau for Montana says 'fair, warmer,' to-day. I looked particularly."

"Then you want to watch out. When them storm doctors say 'fair,' I make it a point to tie my old sour-dough behind my saddle."

"Science never makes mistakes," said Winifred, loftily. "The day is perfect. It is fair—a trifle hazy, but that is caused by smoke—and as warm as one could wish. What do we have a weather bureau for, may I ask?"

"Darned if I know. It's always been a mystery to me. No one with any sense takes any stock in their prognostications." Jed rolled the last word luxuriously upon his tongue, giving it a curious effect of fantastic blasphemy.

"Indeed!"

Winifred smiled again, but the tart of the lemon was fast creeping up through the sugar. She urged her horse past Jed, her eyes anger-bright.

"Are you crazy, Winifred? I tell

you there's a blizzard coming. We'll do well if we beat it home."

Winifred laughed tauntingly back at him.

"You needn't come—run along home and never mind me. We came out to find my Flaxie, and I'm not going home without her."

Jed jerked his horse around angrily.

"Of all the idiots——"

His voice carried further than he intended, for the words reached the girl's ear.

She looked back, and the sweetness of her temper was only a memory.

"Of all the cowards——" Her voice stung like sleet.

That settled it. Jed lifted his horse with his spurs and was alongside her in two bounds.

"Well, if you've got to go, for Heaven's sake let's be moving!"

For some time thereafter there was no sound save that of shod hoofs pounding the barren sod, or striking sharply a sunken rock.

The descent into the coulee was bad—the climb up the other side worse. The man led the way, his jaw set squarely. At the top he half turned in the saddle and looked away to the northwest. As he faced again the east, his eyes lingered upon the girl's face.

"Winifred, what's the use of being ornery? There's a storm coming, and once it catches us out here—the Lord only knows how we'll get home. We'd better light out while we can."

"As I said before," returned Winifred, evenly, "the weather bureau assures us of fair weather. If you are afraid, you are quite welcome to turn back. I am going to look through that band of *horses* over here, first."

What Jed said in reply he was careful she should not overhear, since it was both profane and unchivalrous.

It was: "Damn a woman!"

Half an hour after this unsatisfactory dialogue, they rode over a low ridge and startled a herd drifting instinctively to shelter. Jed reined up sharply.

"Will you admit *now* that them animals are *cattle*?"

Winifred grew very red, wheeled and galloped away without a word, the wild-eyed range cattle staring after her flying figure in amaze. And once more Jed was forced to follow behind for a space, like a groom—for he would not intrude too quickly upon her discomfiture. At the coulee's edge, however, he passed her and led the way.

Halfway down the bluff, a misty veil was drawn suddenly before the far hillside.

"Here comes the storm doctor's fair weather," Jed shouted grimly over his shoulder.

Winifred answered not a word. Dignity, at that point, demanded silence.

At the bottom the storm swooped down upon them malignantly. Jed left his horse and returned to where Winifred stood holding Bluejay by the reins. He untied a roll behind her saddle—a roll against which she had protested vainly when they set out, some hours before.

"Here. Put this coat on while we're out of the wind a little."

He held the coat while she thrust her hands rebelliously into the sleeves.

"It'll be pretty warm going up the hill, maybe, but the wind's a-howling on top." Jed magnanimously bridled his tongue and refrained from adjusting the blame.

At the top they met the full fury of the first blizzard of the season, and Jed thanked God that as yet it was not freezing. He helped Winifred to the saddle and tucked the long coat carefully around her feet. It was an old coat of her father's, and he was a small man. Still, it covered her completely, without being cumbersome, and she was inwardly grateful for his forethought.

Then, observing the deepening pink of her ears, he drew a silk handkerchief from his pocket and directed its tying under her chin.

"But you need it yourself," she murmured, forced to speech.

"Aw, I've got another one. And you can't kill a cowpuncher—except with a club. You can't always do it that way, either."

As he spoke, flashing a glance at her from under his hat rim, he was squirming dexterously into his heavy, canvas overcoat—his sour-dough. Then he caught his stirrup with one hand, thrust in his foot and swung up into the saddle; took his bearings as best he could in the white swirl, and set off confidently at a lope.

And Winifred kept quite meekly beside him.

After this the way grew rough, and Jed commanded her to ride close behind. The time seemed long to Winifred, for their pace was slow and the lines of the hills were confused behind a dancing curtain of snow. She wondered if Jed knew where he was going, but for obvious reasons she did not quite like to ask him.

The earth became blanketed with white, and surrounding objects grew dimmer. They descended another hill, carefully picking their way, and whether she had ever passed this way before, Winifred could not tell.

It was a new world—a threatening, confusing, shifting white world.

At the first level Jed turned and rode back to her side.

"Are—are we lost?" asked Winifred, uncertainly.

"Lost? Not on your life! I'm going to tie this rope on you, is all. This cayuse of yours may be pretty to look at, but he ain't got a lick of sense when you get in a pinch. He'd just as soon roll down a side hill as eat oats, and it's getting slippery. If he goes there's no need of your going, too."

As he bent over her, knotting the rope to his liking, Winifred watched his face with the snow flakes driving thickly across it. It was a comely face, self-reliant and tanned; of a sudden, her fear of the storm seemed a weakness close bordering disgrace.

"You needn't worry at what I said about rolling down hill," he said, reassuringly, when he had finished. "I don't want to take any chances, that's all. Just keep close enough so the rope is slack, then you won't mind it. I want to turn you over to them Dagos at Manilla without any broken bones."

As he started on, he chuckled at the look he surprised upon her face.

"Women," he told himself, sagely, "is a whole lot like horses. Sometimes the quickest way to gentle 'em is to give 'em their heads."

After that, when the storm beat upon them more savagely, he got off and led his horse until a stone rolled under his foot and he fell, giving his weak ankle a wrench, whereupon he swore a little, under his breath, limped back and remounted.

"Are you hurt?" Winifred's tone was mildly solicitous.

"Not to speak of. Gave my ankle a twist, that's all. It's all right."

It was not all right, but Jed was a man who could bear pain without flinching.

"Why don't you go up on top, where it's smother? We could travel much faster," suggested Winifred, but without her former assurance.

"And get plumb lost in five minutes! Down here it's rough, but I can tell where I'm at. I know how these coulees run. Up there it's just blank white."

"Of course," assented Winifred, meekly, and volunteered no more suggestions.

They were working their way around the head of a deep gorge, when Jed halted a moment to call back to her:

"Watch your horse, now. Right here's a nasty piece of trail. Kick your foot out of the stirrup and let him go to Guinea if he slips—but you don't want to let him slip. Give him his head, so he can watch where he's going."

Winifred's heart rose uncomfortably as she peered into the driving storm.

It was an ugly place—she could distinguish that much—a narrow trail at the very edge of a precipitous slope. She could not see the bottom, but it was down there somewhere—a fearsome distance down. She almost wished Jed had not warned her. Whether Bluejay would go to Guinea or not, he would assuredly go quite far enough, once he started. She could see Scamp feeling his way along the trail, his nose close to earth. Jed's left foot was not in the

stirrup, and she wondered if that was the ankle he sprained. So thinking, Bluejay carried her steadily along the narrow pathway.

Perhaps Winifred herself was to blame for what followed. They were almost over when, looking down, a spasm of nervousness seized her and she tightened the reins sharply. The horse threw his head in air and started backward, snorting. His hind feet left the trail, he struggled wildly for his footing and was gone before Winifred realized what was happening.

Jed, feeling the jerk, looked back to see Winifred huddled in the trail, gazing disconsolately after poor Bluejay, now an indefinite black patch below.

"Are you hurt, Winifred?"

The girl stood up, trembling.

"No-o-o—but he'll break my new saddle!" There was a wail in the words.

"He'll break his blamed neck! I always knew that horse wasn't safe, but you would ride him. What if I hadn't roped you, eh? Are you cold?"

Winifred confessed that she was, a little.

"You better walk a ways, then. When we get to smooth going, I'll take you up behind me."

"Scamp won't carry double," said Winifred, argumentatively.

"Aw, yes, he will. He'll have to. Take off that rope and come along—and don't worry about your saddle. I'll send some of the boys back to gather up the fragments—they know the place like a charm."

So Winifred trudged off bravely in the storm, her nose an unbecoming pink from its first experience with a Montana blizzard.

Jed often turned and looked down upon her as she plodded along behind, after which he invariably cursed the foot which condemned him to the saddle. And, to his great credit, he permitted himself only once to say to himself: "Wonder what she thinks about weather bureaux now."

Once, as they passed under the shelter of a projecting ledge, Jed stopped and asked her if she was "bushed."

Winifred shook her head, since she lacked breath for a verbal answer.

"I guess you are, almost." Jed surveyed her critically. "I'll give you a lift pretty soon, now. This is too skittish a place to tackle it."

"How far is it home?" She tried to ask the question casually and failed.

"Not so far as it was," he answered, ambiguously.

Winifred lifted her chin, quite in her old imperious manner.

"I should like to know how many miles."

"Yuh would? Well, now, this piece of country ain't been surveyed yet. It's got to be harrowed first."

"You must have some idea of the distance," persisted Winifred, stamping her foot the least bit.

"Just as you say. Are you rested enough to go on?"

"I'll go when you tell me how far we are from home."

"Aw, don't send the mercury any further down than it is. That tone of yours'd freeze a chinook solid."

Winifred seated herself upon a rock and tried not to shiver.

"Aw, get up and come on! Do you want to be out here all night?" Jed grew angry again. "We've been winding around in these coulees, mind, instead of cutting across on top the way we came. Well, if you must know, we're six miles from home, easy—and you ain't making much headway, sitting on that rock. And one horse has got to get us both home, seeing you couldn't get there alone. I'd send you off, quick enough, if I thought you could make it."

Winifred, having gained her point, rose cheerfully and took up the rope again. Jed, having been forced to submit, rode on sullenly.

At the mouth of the coulee he reined up close to a lone boulder, and stopped.

"Come here and climb on behind, Winifred. Don't let your coat flop so. Scamp won't stand for it. Wait till I take up the rope, first. Whoa! Now put your arms around me—aw, don't be so squeamish! You've got to!"

There was a tumultuous upheaval of

something, somewhere—a tortuous moment of indecision on the part of Winifred, a brief, breathless sensation of flying, and then a snowdrift received her into its downy embrace.

She could hear the biting swish of Jed's rawhide quirt bringing swift retribution to Scamp, and the muffled trampling of hoofs circling always nearer. Not relishing the possibility of being run down, Winifred scrambled ungracefully to her feet.

"Are you hurt?"

Jed forced Scamp close, snorting and shaking from recent chastisement.

"No, I'm not hurt." Winifred's voice was surcharged with reproach.

"All right—come on and try again."

"Thank you. I prefer to walk."

Winifred shook the feathery snow from her skirts and dug a goodly amount from either sleeve, where it had lodged. She felt that she had been made ridiculous, and Winifred preferred serious injury to being made an object of ridicule. From the tremor in Jed's voice, she fancied he was secretly laughing at her—which he was not. Whatever emotion he betrayed was due to the intense pain in his left ankle.

"Aw, come on. Scamp'll give in after a jump or two—he always does. You wouldn't hang on, that's the reason he piled you up."

"I intend to walk." Winifred resented being told that the fault was hers. The fault seemed always to be hers, she reflected bitterly, and took a few tentative steps.

"Winifred, if you walk, I'll walk!" Jed's lips were as firmly set as her own. "Just as you please," she returned, indifferently.

Jed swung down, took an angry stride toward her, wavered and clutched the saddle.

Winifred caught her breath.

"You—*can't* walk!" she cried, sharply.

"Will—you—ride—then?" Jed's lips were white, but he would not give in.

"Yes—oh, yes! Don't stand there and look like that! You—I can't bear it!"

"Come on, then."

Jed remounted with some difficulty and rode up to the rock, where Winifred waited quakingly.

"For goodness' sake, hang to me this time!" he admonished, somewhat irritably.

Winifred, blushing behind the canvas coat, slipped her arms shrinkingly around him and clung desperately, to find that Scamp had turned quite submissive and seemed resolved to bear the outrage with fortitude.

"This beats walking, don't it?" asked Jed, after five minutes' blissful realization of those clinging arms.

Winifred, though she made no reply, certainly did not deny the tacit assertion. She could not forget Jed's face in that instant when he clung to the saddle, and she was consumed by a desire to know the exact state of his feeling toward her. Heretofore she had not troubled much over his thoughts. Jed had always kept her very well informed upon the subject. More than this, her mission to the Philippines grew all at once distasteful and stupid, as viewed from behind the broad back of her father's foreman. Then she remembered how she might have gone down with Bluejay, and unconsciously tightened her clasp—much to the secret rapture of Jed.

"We'll be home in a little while, now," he remarked, "and the storm's lifting."

Winifred caught eagerly at the unmistakable note of regret in his voice.

"I——" Then she became panic-stricken and stopped. It is not easy for a girl like Winifred to make peace overtures.

"What's that?" Jed turned his head.

"I'm—awfully—sorry——"

"Sorry? Because we're almost home? So am I."

Driven to bay, Winifred was filled with the boldness of desperation.

"I'm sorry I called you a coward—and because you hurt your foot, and it's my fault because I wouldn't turn back when you wanted me to—and because I wouldn't believe it was cattle."

If Winifred had been safe on the ground, I think she would have fled at

this point, but as it was, she still clung, and was thankful he could not see her face.

But Jed faced disgustedly to the front again. Then, resting his chin once more upon his shoulder, he delivered a parable—the first and only one he ever was guilty of, for his method of speech was, generally speaking, as straightforward as his life.

"If I'd committed a murder, Winifred, I don't think I'd break my heart because I had to smash a window to get in, or stepped on somebody's tomato plants, or anything like that. If I wasn't sorry for the murder, I don't believe I'd lose any sleep over the other things."

"I don't see how that applies," said Winifred, spiritedly, but her tone lacked conviction.

"You don't? Well, study on it a while."

A wavering bar of sunlight shot through the storm, turning to rose the white hillside where it fell. Winifred watched it glide away into a hollow and touch tenderly the slope beyond. Next, they themselves were bathed briefly in the dazzling glow.

"Jed!"

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry—for the murder, too."

Jed squirmed around to get a glimpse of her face, thereby causing Winifred to tighten her clasp convulsively, in fear of falling.

"I—look here! You know what I asked you when we started out—have you got a different answer now?"

There was no escape.

"Er—y-e-s——"

"And have you got any mission to go and teach them Filipinos their A B C's?" Jed was relentless.

"N-o-o—er—that is, I——"

Jed laughed, then straightway groaned.

"And you're stuck there behind me, where a fellow can't—Steady, Scamp! Reach around here and kiss me, Winnie—quick or, so help me gracious, I'll set Scamp to pitching again!"

Winifred, thus intimidated, made haste to obey.

# THE KING'S JESTER

By Margaret Sherwood



ON the mountainside the towers of the King's castle rose gray and strong. Below clustered the dull red roofs of the city, with the blue river winding past, and all about stretched wide, green plains where vineyards lay under the open sky, and poplar trees and cypress, acacia and magnolia, told that the land lay toward the south.

Now, King Bernard, who reigned there, came back one day from war with great noise of tramping steeds and with fluttering of banners, purple and gold—for it was victory. Behind him on a snow-white steed rode the son of King John of Pindamont, the Prince Maurice, for he was taken captive, and his hands were bound with fetters that it had needed ten men and strong to place there. That night there was reveling and rejoicing in the streets of Haute Laverne where King Bernard reigned, for he and his father and his grandfather, King Geoffrey, had been ever at war with Pindamont, and never before had they taken one of the blood royal.

So all that winter Prince Maurice lay in a dungeon in the tower, with no light save from a grated window. Oft was he quiet with the quiet of the strong man who waits; oft he wrenched the bars of his window with his hands, for he was mighty of muscle, but he achieved naught. Through the bars he might see the white road that mounted to the castle, and there he spied coming and going the banner bearers and the King's men at arms, and he gnashed his

teeth. Also, could he look into the garden where oft the pages and the squires disported themselves, and now and then came the Princess Isabelle, clad all in soft crimson, like a flame, or in cloth of gold, and her gait was stately and slow, as became a king's daughter. Two by two her waiting women ever followed, and they were six in number. Five times he saw them go. The first time the Princess Isabelle lifted her eyes and they met his within the grate; the second and the third she looked upon the ground; the fourth, she gave a swift glance upward, but spoke to her woman of a falcon that had lighted on the window; the fifth time the sun was shining, and on her lowered lids he saw the gleam of tears.

Much else he saw from his window as he watched the winter through. Now it was the marriage of the Countess Angeliq, and gay plumes nodded at the chapel door; now it was the burying of the King's Jester, old Nicholet, and King Bernard, with the fair haired Prince Renard that was his nephew, went by in black, and all the men at arms walked after. Then came spring, and a ransom was paid; also it was agreed that each year tribute should be sent from Pindamont; and so Prince Maurice went home to his own, but the hatred was greater than ever before.

One day when all was done came the Princess Isabelle into the garden as aforetime, and, as she lifted her eyes toward the prison grate, her waiting woman spoke:

"Is it not well that there is peace between us and Pindamont?"

Then the Princess Isabelle turned sad



brown eyes upon her, and said slowly: "Is it peace?"

Thereafter she walked daily in the garden, and the spring came on.

One day there was loud knocking at the castle gate, and the porter, opening, saw one stand there in cap and bells, and he asked to see the King.

"What wouldst thou?" asked King Bernard of the motley man, as he sat in a chamber with Prince Renard, his nephew, and talked of things of state.

"I' faith, sire," the man made answer, "I would fill the place that thou hast none in thy court to fill," and he bowed low, so that his bells rang.

"And what may that be?"

"That of fool," answered the Jester. "This man thou hast with thee could but ill play the part, for I see by the shrewdness of his eye that he is none."

Then the King laughed out, but Prince Renard did not so, for he liked it not.

"But why should any man play the part for me?" asked King Bernard, for he would test his wit.

"In that thou, having no space for it inside thy head, hast need of thy folly outside thee."

Then was the King pleased, for he was a vain man, and he said full kindly: "And who is thy father?"

"One of thy subjects," answered the motley man, full sadly, "and his given name is John."

"What has thy training been?"

"Even that of most men," was the answer, "that which will not avail me when need is."

"Why hast thou come hither?"

"Sire," answered the Jester, and there was that in his tone which befitted not his light words, "even for the reason which accounteth for most men's deeds—because I was a fool."

Then King Bernard turned smiling to the Prince, his nephew.

"Renard," he commanded, "see that my Jester hath bed and board, for he shall abide with me."

In the castle garden that afternoon the Princess Isabelle yawned. In truth it was a drowsy air, for the perfume of

the magnolia trees was heavy, and spring sunlight shone through young poplar leaves and on the vivid grass. The peacocks on the carved stone railings slept; birds gave little dreamy chirps from leafy branches; even the stone dragons of the fountain, where the water splashed monotonously slow, seemed to blink. The mossy gray stone seat along whose back the Princess rested her outstretched arms was warm under the sun.

"Would your Highness like to be read to?" asked the pale blue lady in waiting, keeping back a yawn.

"No," said Princess Isabelle.

"Shall I bring out your Highness' embroidery frame?" asked the waiting lady in pale green.

"No, no!" answered the Princess Isabelle, laying her cheek against the warm gray stone.

The ladies in waiting looked worried. Their orders were that the Princess should be amused, and she was ever listless and weary nowadays.

"Perhaps your Highness would like to hear the verses of the poet, René, who will declaim before the Court this afternoon," ventured the waiting lady in pale yellow.

"No, no, no!" cried the Princess Isabelle, impatiently tossing the sleeves of her white-embroidered gown. "He would but spoil the sunshine."

Then there was silence and dismay, save for the dull splashing of the water, the low notes of the birds, and the soft ripple of opening leaves, which none heard but the Princess.

Suddenly the pale blue lady put her finger to her lips, saying "Hist!" and from far across the blood-red tulips and the splendid purple iris sounded the faint tinkle of bells. Then they saw, coming with wayward steps and slow down the long garden walks, a motley figure, whose feet within his pointed shoes seemed thinking, so slowly they went. They were so quiet that the odd creature, walking with his head bent down, was aware of nothing till he stood by the fountain where a spouting dragon's mouth splashed drops of water on his face. Then he lifted his eyes and



saw, under a canopy of green-gold leaves, on the gray seat flecked with hints of moss, the dark-haired Princess all in white looking lazily out from half-closed eyes, and he started, standing as one dazed.

"Fool," said the pale green lady, merrily, "hast never seen a princess before now?"

"Ay!" he made answer, and his voice came as out of the past, "that have I, one."

"Bare thy head afore the Princess. Where be thy manners?" whispered the waiting lady in yellow.

Then the Jester bent the knee, but left his head covered, and his cap came low upon his brows. The Princess Isabelle took her arms from the stone and sat erect, gazing with eyes that opened ever wider, and so she spoke.

"Thou wearest strange garments, friend."

"They be honest ones," answered the Jester, softly.

"Wilt not remove thy cap to greet thy Princess?"

"Lady," he made answer, bending low the knee, "on whose head soever the fool's cap resteth, from him may the powers of king and of court not remove it."

"Art in very truth a fool?" asked the Princess, watching him ever.

"Ay," he said, sadly, "and how greatly I never knew until this moment."

A flickering smile, swifter than the passing wing of a swallow, dipped across the face of the Princess.

"Dost like thy lot?"

"Ay," he made answer. "Dost like thine?"

"Oft," said the Princess, "and oft not."

"And now?" asked the Jester, leaning forward with all his bells a-ringing.

"Now, methinks, it grows full of interest," answered the Princess, gazing ever at the gray eyes of the Fool.

Then the pale blue lady and the pale green lady and the pale yellow lady drew sighs of deep relief. The Princess Isabelle was being amused!

The Fool had winsome ways, and

soon all loved him at the Court of Haute Laverne, for he wore ever a light heart upon his sleeve—whatever he wore inside—and had always a merry jest. Antics he had none, as had old Nicholet, but swift retorts and gay songs, ay, and sweet words, also, if he saw one sorrowful or in need. The gardener's child that had lost a pet bird he comforted with a tale of the dragon and St. George; and to the chimney sweep he gave a golden coin that brought quick joy to shine within the dust-rimmed eyes. When the Princess' dog that wore the silver bell fell from the garden wall, it was the King's Jester who bandaged the broken leg. The kerchief wherewith he bound it the Princess hid away, that none might see what was broided there above the letter "M." All sought him to drive their care away, so that he was much with the King and his counselors, and much with the Princess and her waiting women. Watching ever, he saw more than men knew, and was aware where the eyes of all about him rested, and with what desire. Those of the King followed Prince Renard, and their look was of one who asks counsel; those of Prince Renard were ever on Princess Isabelle, with the look of one who asks all; those of the Princess sought ever the grass, or the far line where the sea lay blue, with the look of one who would hide what lay within them. None knew what the Fool saw, for he wore his cap low above his eyes to shade them; and none questioned him or his purpose because he made them laugh.

One night it befell that the Princess Isabelle was restless and could not sleep, and tossed upon her silken pillow. In vain did she count birds flying through the air to win sleep to her eyes, for ever the birds flew back to her with her thoughts upon their wings. As she waked, a faint sound came to her of music, mingled with the perfume of the climbing roses and the honeysuckles at her window, damp with dew. Then the Princess Isabelle rose and stood beside a window within the shadow; and the night wind that lifted her long white sleeves and drooping hair brought to her

from far a melody that was the sweetest that ever she heard.

"'Tis the Song of My Eyes," sang a voice to the sound of the lute.

Where yellow daffodils unfold,  
My lady walks in cloth of gold.

Near roses red on dim gray walls,  
Her robe of crimson samite falls.

By paths where tall white lilies grow,  
My lady passes, gowned in snow.

Beside the royal fleur-de-lis,  
Her purple train afar I see.

And beauty's ever new surprise  
Smites in sweet pain upon my eyes.

Long after it was ended, the Princess Isabelle stole back to her couch and fell into a dreamless sleep.

The next day the Princess was summoned to come before her father's throne, and there she found all in waiting on the right hand and the left. The ladies of the Court were brave in velvet and in silken gowns; his Majesty's gentlemen wore cunningly slashed doublets and silken hose, and it was as if many gay birds of bright plumage had lighted there. At the King's right hand stood Prince Renard, clad in velvet of the color of the fox, which is of brown that touches red. The Princess Isabelle was in red, also, but of the deep red of the summer rose. Entering with stately step, she bent before the King, and stood as one who waited.

"Daughter," said King Bernard, "I have no son."

Then the face of the Princess flushed faintly, but she said no word, and the King's Jester whispered:

"Methinks the Princess is not to blame that she came not into the world a knave child."

"Peace!" said the King, and he spoke further.

"Now upon thee and upon thy issue must come the cares of the kingdom, and thou art but a weak thing, being a woman. I would fain see one at thy side who would bear all for thee; so have I chosen thy cousin, the Prince Renard, to wed thee and to share the kingdom when I am gone. This day

have I called thee hither that thy betrothal may be made known."

Then the Princess made no answer, and there was silence through the vaulted hall, while the eyes of Prince Renard twinkled beneath his rusty brows as they narrowly watched the Princess Isabelle.

"How now, daughter?" asked the King, at length. "Art not glad to have a brave man and one of blood royal to thy spouse?"

"Nay," answered the Princess Isabelle, "and I wed not my cousin, the Prince Renard."

The King's hand went to his beard as if he were sore perplexed, and a hundred pairs of eyes were fixed upon the face of the Princess.

"And what reason canst thou give?" asked the King.

"None, save that it pleaseth me not," she made answer.

Now the face of the King was easy to read, and it spoke both wrath and wonder; and the faces of those about were easy to read, and bespoke dumb surprise; but two faces there were as masks, and one was of the Prince Renard and one was of the King's Jester. In the quiet was a faint tinkle of bells, and the King turned to him that wore them.

"Here, sirrah," said he, "be reasons that none but a fool may understand. Read me the reasons of the Princess Isabelle."

The Princess lifted her eyes to the Jester, but said nothing, nor did she need.

"Sire," he made answer, "nature maketh ever like and like. Nightingale doth wed nightingale, and hawk hawk; nor doth she ever join for the good of her kingdom, which is greater than thine, dove with fox——"

"Hold!" cried Prince Renard, and his hand went to his side, but the King only laughed, saying:

"Perchance thou dost say that nature doth ever wed fool with fool and wouldst wed the Princess thyself to make her queen of thy kingdom of folly?"

Then the motley man spoke further, not daring to lift his eyes.

"Nature knoweth her own ends, and to them some sure instinct doth ever guide. So say I that even as the thrush knoweth her mate, and weddeth not falcon, doth the Princess know where her heart goeth."

"In truth, thou hast a pretty wisdom in thy fool's noddle," cried the King. "Now shall the Prince Renard see if he can match aught with this."

Then Prince Renard, all trembling with wrath, spoke words which strained hard to be courteous, but within were not so, and he made as if he would not wed the Princess unless she came gladly to him. The King looked sharply at him, while the Princess Isabelle gazed upon the ground, and the Fool's eyes sought the vaulted roof of the chamber.

"So are we of one mind," said the King, "and that a woman's. My years are as yet but five and forty, and I will stay my haste to bring one after me upon the throne."

As the Princess Isabelle went out from the presence chamber her face flamed of a sudden the color of her gown. The Prince Renard, passing where the Jester stood, cast on him a look of hatred, while his teeth showed white, but the Fool's eyes wandered only from carven leaf to carven leaf in the tracery as if he were aware of nothing in the room save the ceiling.

After this the waiting women made all manner of merriment with the Fool, and said that he was even as a knight of old that rescued damsels from distress, nor could they see in his eyes a look of grief that this was to them but a jest. One day, when soft rain fell, and the Princess walked in a loggia that was sculptured fair with twisted marble columns and delicately wrought arch, the Lady Blanche of a sudden clapped her hands for glee at the thought that had come to her, and quickly the others gathered about to hear, blue robe and yellow and green breaking the gray mist.

"We will make of him a knight!" she cried out in her laughter. "Our Princess shall knight him with the sword!"

So they brought the Fool thither and, mocking, bade him keep vigil with his

face toward the east as to an altar, and all the while they crept about him with merry whispers. At the end of the loggia the Princess sat on a dais that they had reared for her of chairs and stools, and she watched, with a smiling sadness on her face, the maidens' pranks. Then one stole the Fool's bauble from his hand and led him to the feet of the Princess.

"Knight him, gracious Highness," she cried, giving the bauble into her hand. "'Tis Sir Bambosofuriades."

The Fool knelt down at the feet of the Princess Isabelle, and she gave him a blow with the bauble as if it had been a sword. And he made answer:

"So vow I myself to my lady's service in sickness and in health," and with that he lifted his eyes to hers for an instant's space. As he rose, the maidens crowded round him, with echoing laughter.

"Wilt wear my favor?" cried the blue maiden, holding forth a brodered scarf.

"Mine!" cried the yellow maiden, binding a string of pearls upon his arm.

"Nay, mine!" cried the green maiden, snatching a bit of trailing vine from the pillar and laying it upon his shoulder.

"Nay," said the Jester, as he thrust them gently aside. "There is but one favor that I covet and it may not be mine, so go I bare forever. But to the lady who withholds it is my service, henceforward as heretofore."

"'Tis a stupid game," cried the Lady Blanche, yawning of a sudden. "Let us play with the tennis balls."

That night again one sang in the garden, to the sound of strings.

"'Tis the Song of My Ears," he chanted.

My lady's voice hath all things won,  
To melody.  
Where rippling waters meet and run,  
It comes to me.

When wind-stirred poplar trees a-near  
Sway up and down,  
The murmur of her voice I hear,  
And of her gown.

My lady's feet have touched the strings  
Of all and all;  
The inner harmony of things  
Is in their fall.

And the fountain, and the night wind, and the singer's voice, as it died away, and the Princess Isabelle, all sighed together in one sad sweetness.

After this the face of the Jester wore a troubled look, but the trouble was not his own. From under his mask he watched the face of Prince Renard under his, and he knew that there was mischief brewing in the heart of him who had lost a crown and more. Also he heard rumors that there was murmuring in Pindamont and talk of an uprising, and then he walked in lonely corners with the bent head of the man who has with him a problem of which the answer is not yet writ. At Haute Laverne, hate waxed high of this people that would prove rebels ere yet they had learned to be subjects, and he heard many a threat against King John, and Prince Maurice, and all their men.

One day as he stood near the King he spoke of a sudden:

"Sire, I am half minded to leave thy service if thou wilt permit. There is need of me elsewhere."

"And for what?" cried the King.

"Of my sword," answered the Jester, in the voice of one whose thoughts were louder than his speech. Then the King laughed loud and long.

"Forsooth, I have more fear of thy knife at trencher than of thy sword in battle."

The Jester's face flushed deep red and his hand went to his side, but found only patches there. The King saw and was puzzled.

"Would a fool fight?" he asked, half in jest, half in earnest.

"Sire," the man made answer, sadly, as the old thoughts flocked back to his eyes, "who but a fool would fight?" and the King was greatly pleased.

That day he was called to the garden to make sport, and the waiting ladies pelted him with syringa blossoms, all a shower of white, and with pale purple wistaria blooms, and he fought them off with merry fingers and gay feet, yet his face was the face of one in pain. All this the Princess saw from her stone seat and understood. Then the waiting women stopped, panting, and began to

jest with the Fool; some sitting on the green grass to rest; some leaning against the marble basin of the fountain where the spray fell on hair and face; and two against the marble pillars over which trailed budding vines.

"Fool," said the blue lady, "tell us of thy life. I would know what goeth into the training of a grown fool."

"Much that goeth into the training of a grown prince," he made answer. The Princess Isabelle smiled.

"Wert ever in war?" asked the green lady, and with that came a shower of white and of purple blossoms, making siege at eye and ear. Right valiantly he gave them back, and some lodged in her dark hair and stayed there.

"Yes," he made answer.

"Didst come off victor?"

"Whiles, and whiles not."

"Wert ever in prison?"

"Ay, that was I."

Then the Princess started on the stone seat, and the water to her ears murmured anxiously.

"Are we not all, lady?" said the Fool, and he touched his arm. "Saith not the philosopher that the soul is ever prisoned in the flesh?"

The Princess drew a deeper breath and leaned back as if eased from pain.

"Hast been in love?" asked the lady in yellow, who leaned against the pillar.

"Ay."

"And art hopeless?"

Then the Jester bent his head and his voice thrilled them through.

"Thrice hopeless, lady."

"'Tis a good actor," said Lady Blanche, from the grass.

"Hast told thy love?" asked the maiden in pale green, at her side.

"Nay," he made answer, "nor shall I."

"Hast sung to her?" asked Lady Jeanne, lightly, throwing drops of water from the fountain hither and yon with her hand. Here the Princess of a sudden shaded her face with her sleeve of white and gold as if the sun had flamed there with too great heat.

"Yea, twice," confessed the motley man, pacing the garden path, nor ever lifting his eyes.

"Hath she made no reply, nor shown

by word or by look that she love thee?"

"Nay," he said, sadly.

Then a faint sound like that of a smile made audible echoed among the poplar leaves, and it was as if one whispered, "Oh, Fool!" yet none of the maidens had spoken and all thought it was the mockingbird in the acacia near at hand.

Here came into the garden a bearward that led a dancing bear, and the ladies, in waiting ran swiftly to see, leaving the Princess and the Fool face to face alone.

"Hush!" said the Princess, leaning over. "Dost not know thy danger?"

"Yea," said the Jester, smiling.

The Princess Isabelle lifted her arm and pointed to the spot where knights and ladies were gathered at the far end of the garden, and whispered:

"Yonder go my father's men, and they are a thousand strong. If they knew thee for what thou art they would hack thee in pieces, deeming thee a spy, for thee and thy people they hate with deadly hatred. When thou wert safe and set free, why didst not abide away?"

"Lady," said the Jester, "I have never been set free, for my spirit stayed ever captive."

"Go," said the Princess Isabelle. "There is yet time for escape ere they find thee out."

"That will I, but not to-day."

"To-night," pleaded the Princess, "through the postern gate, for the sake of the lady thou lovest, though I know not who she may be."

Then the voice of the Fool broke into song as he stood by the fountain and watched the Princess on the gray-green seat of stone.

"'Tis the Song of My Soul," said he.

The loveliness of earth is she,  
I dare not name;  
Her face is beauty come to be,  
Her soul a flame.

The soul of the Princess flamed into her face, and her hands were outstretched right swiftly.

"How couldst thou brave such utter danger when—she loved thee?"

"For naught save to be near," he

made answer, in a passion, "to hear again her faint footfall and the rustle of her gown. Now have I made myself a butt for men's laughter. Here bide I, among mine ancient enemies, and each jest and gibe they make is as a spark to tinder, for the old fighting blood runs hot in my veins. Against him whose salt I have partaken may I not fight; nor to mine own side of the battle may I go without knowing well that I have been here as spy. Oh, Fool, Fool, Fool!" and he smote upon his breast.

The Princess Isabelle rose, and her gown of gold and white fell in silken folds about her. The Prince Renard had passed that way, and she went to see the bear. When she reached the spot she found all eager and astir. The bearward had brought rumors that Pindamont was in arms, and among the men of Haute Laverne there was sudden clash of armor and the sound of smitten steel, with threats that issued from clinched teeth against the enemy.

"Sir Fool," said the Princess, languidly, for he had followed her steps, "wilt surely go on mine errand before the sunrise?"

"Ay, gracious Highness, that will I," said the Fool, taking the bear's paws in his hands and beginning to dance, so that all shouted with laughter.

That evening, when the sun had set, the Fool walked, with his head bent down, under the willows in the furthest corner of the garden toward the postern gate. Slowly he went, as one loath to go, and when the last tree was reached he laid his hands upon a great limb and sprang upon it, stretching out his legs for comfort there, and leaning back against the trunk. One by one the stars came out in the dark blue sky, and the Fool lingered on, for not yet could he summon courage to leave this moist, sweet air that had kissed his lady's face and now kissed his own. So quiet he was in his thoughts that not one of the bells tinkled in the great stillness, that was broken only now and then by the call of the little owl that says ever "Q." Presently he woke from the dreams that were strong upon him, and heard two that walked among the willow trees

speaking together. No need was there to see their faces, for he knew them both by voice.

"Is all ready?" asked Prince Renard.

"Ay," answered old Lord Johan, who was ever full of discontent. "On the stroke of twelve I slip the postern bolt, and Pindamont comes in."

"So win I back my bride," said Prince Renard, "and mayhap my kingdom, who knows? 'Twill be easy to overcome our new master when he hath ousted this one!" and with that he laughed in a snarl that was ill to hear.

"So win I back my lands that King Bernard took from me," grumbled old Lord Johan.

"'Tis easy—naught but the slipping of a bolt," and so the two passed on. Then the Jester sat, sore puzzled, for to go to the King would be but to betray his own; to go out to his own would be to meet men who could not be stopped by a single arm. Better would it be to face the arch traitor and lay him low before the bolt was drawn.

So it befell that when Prince Renard and Lord Johan and their followers crept toward the postern gate at midnight they came upon the Jester walking to and fro, and he had a torch stuck in a cranny in the wall.

"What dost thou here?" asked Prince Renard.

"Faith," answered the Fool, "'tis but a bit of play acting."

"And what part dost thou take?"

"My pretense was that I was a prince and in love," answered the other. "I was dreaming of verses to be sung beneath my lady's window, and of battles to be fought for her, and see, in my sport, I brought hither a sword."

"Let me take it for thee," said Prince Renard. "'Twill but trip thee up."

"Nay," answered the Jester, "perchance it may trip some one else, and that were rare sport for me."

"Why dost thou choose out this spot for thy mumming?" asked old Lord Johan.

"'Tis solitary," he made answer, "and so fit for men whose deeds would not be seen. I am but a poor actor, like

many others," and his eyes were keen in the darkness.

"Come with me into yon lighted space," said Prince Renard, coaxingly, as he slipped his arm through the Fool's to draw him away, "for I would see thy puppet show."

"Nay, here is my stage, and I may play on no other."

"Tut, go to rest," said old Lord Johan. "'Tis time honest folk be in bed."

"What do ye forth?" asked the Jester, suddenly, as he played with the hilt of his sword. Here the bell tolled the hour of midnight.

"Enough!" cried Prince Renard, angrily. "Come, or I will run thee through! I have business afoot thou shalt not hinder."

"That shall be as it shall be," answered the Jester, and his blade gleamed in the torchlight.

"Put up thy toy," said Prince Renard, sneeringly; "thou wilt but cut thy hands." Then he gave a low call and an armed man came running.

"Take him!" commanded Prince Renard. "Alive or dead, I care not."

There was a sound of steel that cut the air, and the man lay prone, while the Fool stood with his back against the postern gate as one who waited.

"Now come on, all," cried Prince Renard, in a passion, "for this passes jest. I would slay him myself but that I may not fight a fool."

From all sides came men in armor, and they crowded into the narrow path between trees where the Fool stood alone. Striking out, he felled one, and another, and another, and strange it was to hear the faint tinkling of bells among the blows of battle, and to see a Fool's arm deal so mighty strokes. Old Lord Johan stood as one in a maze, and Prince Renard gnashed his teeth as one mad, but neither entered the combat. The fifth man that came on was of sterner stuff, and the Jester was hard put to it. Of a sudden, it chanced that a blow which cut his face threw off his fool's cap and his head was bare where the torchlight fell.

"'Tis the Prince Maurice of Pindamont," cried old Lord Johan, and the



men fell back. Then Prince Renard drew his sword and came forward, speaking between clinched teeth.

"What meaneth this?"

"That have I told already," answered Prince Maurice, wiping the blood from his face on his fool's sleeve. "'Tis but a bit of a play that I act for mine own pleasure."

"Thou hast come as a spy to betray us to thy father, the King," snarled Prince Renard, and still he came nearer.

"'Tis a strange charge from the Prince Renard," answered the other, smiling, as he fingered idly his hilt.

Then the traitor remembered his own plot which surprise had driven out of his mind, and he held out his hand to his foe.

"In truth, I begin to understand," he cried, heartily. "Thou art with us and wouldst play into our hands. Verily thou art a clever actor and a daring. Now, join we hands, for our purposes are one."

Then the Jester's lip curled in scorn.

"There is no power in Christendom could make me touch so vile a hand as thine," he made answer. "Now, who are friends and who foes has grown hard for me to say, but friend am I to no traitor."

Here came a knocking at the gate, and, while Prince Renard sprang at him who wore the Jester's dress and grappled at him, old Lord Johan slipped the postern bolt, and one by one the men at arms of Pindamont filed in. As they came with clash of steel and ringing of chain armor, they were met by one in motley garb, who cried "Halt!" but they greeted him with jeers, for, over the wounded body of Prince Renard, Prince Maurice had reached for his jester's cap and had it on so that none knew him.

By now all within the castle was astir. Lights gleamed from window slits, and athwart the darkness torches were carried to and fro, and there were cries and hurried words. Questions were asked and not answered, and all was trouble under the dark blue sky where shone white stars. By the postern gate the torch that the Fool had lighted was put out, so that man grap-

pled with man in the darkness, and none knew if it were friend or foe whom he held by the throat. Soon with trampling of feet came men with torches, and in the sudden light Prince Maurice saw the King's own face, for he had come thither, roused from sleep, and was all unarmed. So the Jester sprang before the King, and brandished high his sword, and a cry went up from the men of Pindamont: "The King! 'Tis King Bernard! Upon him! Upon him!" Then those who came forward were met by a man in motley, who held high a sword.

"Out, Fool!" cried a knight in black armor, and the Prince knew him for his father's seneschal, Sir Amalides.

"Back, or I run thee through!" cried the Jester, and because the knight would not obey he made good his word upon his body, and upon that of a second knight that came after. Then came a shout of wonder from all who looked on, for never yet had armed men seen man in motley who fought as this one fought. With that came a third knight in armor thrusting at the King, who stood behind the Fool, and the Fool took the thrust in his shoulder so that the blood gushed forth, then lifted high his cap with the bells and stood uncovered before them.

"Who touches King Bernard steps over my dead body," said Prince Maurice. "Of his salt have I eaten, and him will I defend," and with that all the men of Pindamont fell back in wonder and amaze.

But Prince Renard had staggered to his feet, mad for his baffled plans, and, sore wounded as he was, he dashed the near torches to the ground, and grappled with the King, his uncle, springing at him from behind. Prince Maurice was swift and lay quick strokes upon him, until he fell heavily to earth, and blood gushed out from under his gay doublet. After him, with a sudden groan, fell Prince Maurice, and his sword dropped from his hand; so he lay in his fool's garments with arms wide stretched upon the damp earth.

Then there was silence, and the men of Pindamont, falling back, gazed where

their young Prince lay on earth, but dared no further, and wondered how he came there, for that which they had thought to do was kept secret from King and Prince. Close about King Bernard gathered the men at arms of Haute Laverne to protect him now that there was no need.

"Now read me this riddle who may," said King Bernard, and his voice was terrible and strong. "To whom came guests from Pindamont at this hour of night?"

Then Prince Renard stirred faintly, but could ill see through fast glazing eyes; and old Lord Johan stole into the shadow of a magnolia tree hard by, but all they who had been traitors with them gathered close around the King, as if they had never left his side.

"How comes it," asked the King, "that the defense of my body is left to my poor Fool?" and there was that in his voice which told that he knew who had saved his life.

None gave answer, for all were stricken dumb. Suddenly, with swift rustle of soft-falling silk, came the Princess Isabelle, all in rose color, and carrying a taper in her hand. None of her ladies followed, for all were afraid to come. A moment she stood looking from one to another, nor could she understand, but her eyes lighted upon King Bernard and were glad when she saw him stand unharmed. Then her glance fell to earth, and there, all pale, lay the face of the Jester, with eyes closed fast and dark hair flecked with blood. With swift arms outstretched went forward Princess Isabelle and knelt beside him with her taper still in her right hand, and so she bent and kissed his eyelids, for she thought him dying; meanwhile, all were breathless for a moment's space.

"Daughter," cried the King, "'tis a brave man, but 'tis only my Fool," for the King knew him not, having seen but his back as he stood fighting.

"Ay," said the Princess Isabelle, "thy Fool and mine, the Prince Maurice."

Then King Bernard cried out, in wonder and amaze, and all crowded about him to tell of the strange thing that had come to pass. Many voices sounded together, like the buzzing of bees in a sunny spot on a late afternoon.

The eyes of Prince Maurice opened and half saw. Over his breast lay the dark hair of the Princess, which had loosened itself and fallen free. Feebly and with wandering mind he sang:

Her face is beauty come to be,  
Her soul a flame.

"Daughter," said King Bernard, coming forward, "to this, our ancient enemy, owe I my life."

"And I mine," said the Princess Isabelle, yet none understood her save her lover, whose wits were coming slowly back.

"'Tis the foe of mine house," said King Bernard. "What wouldst thou do with him?"

Bending low beneath her hair, the Princess Isabelle made answer:

"I would nurse him back to health and would wed him."

"Unwooded?" cried out the King.

"Nay," she made answer, "long wooed, and won."

Then the men at arms of Haute Laverne and those of Pindamont caught the words, and all burst out into so loud acclaim that the motion and the stir of breath made the long torches flare against the darkness.

"Peace!" they cried out. "It is peace!"

"Ay, so methinks," said King Bernard, stroking his long beard.

The Princess Isabelle, gathering the wounded head of the Jester to her bosom, echoed the words:

"It is peace."



# THE GRAY GIRL

By Ralph Henry Barbour



IM WALDON frowned at the canvas before him and laid aside palette and brushes. Tilting himself back, he squinted fiercely through half-closed eyes, drawing his forehead into deep wrinkles. Presently he sighed dispiritedly, pushed back his chair and walked to the single broad window that relieved the pallid monotony of the studio walls. It was just short of noon. Spring had come to New York at last, and below, amid the branches of a leafing maple, birds were quarreling joyously.

On either side stretched a quiet, half-shabby street, lined with old-fashioned brick houses. Before him an unlovely vista of flat slate roofs, broken by all sorts and conditions of chimneys, presented itself. The noise of the avenues, equidistant from the studio building, came subduedly. From long acquaintanceship Waldon had grown to look upon the warm-hued residences opposite as friends in adversity, and sympathized with them in their pathetic efforts to rise above the degradation imposed by the "To Rent" and "Table Board" signs that adorned the first-floor windows. Wide doors, flanked by side lights and brightened now and then by shining brass knockers, stared patiently across at the tall and ornate structure of terra cotta and sandstone.

To-day, however, Waldon was out of harmony with the old houses; out of harmony with everything. He frowned at the fussing, flitting sparrows; it sounded as though they were jeering the disconsolate countenance that looked down at them.

"Of course you're happy," he mut-

tered, enviously. "You've had breakfast."

Waldon hadn't; nor dinner the day before; nor lunch before that. Only somewhere in the roseate past he had feasted on a regal breakfast of codfish steak and a baked potato. And, yes, there had been coffee, a particularly large cup of coffee, with a delicious froth of whipped cream on top. He wondered blankly, as he turned away and retraced his steps to the easel, when he would find another. Somewhere inside of him little cramp-like pains were biting. He turned the wet canvas face to the easel.

"Another morning wasted," he said aloud, as he sank weakly onto the chair. "Genius is popularly supposed to thrive on an empty stomach, but"—he glanced absently about, caught sight of his blackened brier pipe, and thrust it between his lips—"but I'm hanged if I can! I suppose I'm no genius."

He puffed slowly at the empty bowl. He was nearly always alone, and the habit of uttering his thoughts aloud had fastened upon him. He spoke his thoughts now, mumbling the words over his pipe stem.

"But, genius or no genius, I've got to eat. A man can go without clothes so long as he doesn't exhibit himself in public; he can do without tobacco and beer, and books and theaters and papers; but—he's *got* to eat! I've tried to persuade myself to the contrary since the day before yesterday—or was it the day before that?—but—I'm not persuaded; at least my stomach isn't."

He writhed in his seat as a spasm of pain gripped him, and grinned like a satyr until it had passed.

"Well, granted then that I must eat. The next question is—where? How? I can't borrow; the only fellow that I know well enough to beg from is Carleton, and he's away. I might write to him, but by the time I got his answer, I should in all probability be beyond caring whether I ate or not. As for pawning"—he scowled about the bare room—"there's nothing left, absolutely nothing—except those miserable sketches, and I'll starve rather than enter another shop with 'em. Well, now let's see. I can't borrow, I can't earn, I won't beg. Very well, I'll steal. Only, you know, I must eat!" He glared savagely at the easel, as though expecting contradiction.

"It's well enough to talk of honesty and all that when you're well fed," he went on, bitterly, "but it's another thing when you're empty right down to the soles of your boots, and have pains crawling all around your insides. After this, I'll know how to sympathize with the poor devils that steal their bread, if it is stealing to take food when you're starving."

For a time he sat moodily frowning into the sunlit world outside the open casement. Presently he tossed aside his pipe with a grimace of repulsion. The taste of the tobacco-soaked horn made him nauseated and faint.

"The fact that this state of affairs is only temporary; that sooner or later I shall have money to burn, is pleasant enough to consider, but it doesn't take the place of food. A week or so from now those magazine folks will send me their check for ninety dollars. Ninety dollars! Good God, that's two hundred solid dinners and breakfasts! And I'm in a fair way to actually starve before I can touch it! I wonder—perhaps I'm not so hungry as I think. Perhaps if I went out and got some fresh air into my lungs I'd feel better."

He arose and walked to the window again. When he reached it, a sensation of desperate weakness and dizziness seized him, and he clutched the sill and steadied himself until it had passed.

"That's a new symptom," he said, grimly. "I must be getting on. As a

matter of scientific interest, I'd like to know what stage of the process I've reached." He leaned out, drawing the warm, noontide air into his lungs with grateful inhalations. Suddenly he started and sniffed eagerly. From a neighboring kitchen arose an odor less fragrant perchance than the scent of roses, but to the man at the window sweeter than all the mingled odors of Araby.

"Oh, Lord!" he gasped. "Onions!"

A second stronger, more enticing whiff floated upward to his nostrils, and with a smothered oath he seized a shabby felt hat and strode quickly out into the dim corridor. Fate had decided.

The door of the adjoining studio was wide open and a flood of white light streamed out. Waldon drew himself up and jauntily hummed a tune as he passed it, with gaze set straight before him. Not for all the dinners in the world would he have had the Gray Girl guess his plight.

He didn't know her real name, for he had never spoken to her, and her door held no card. She was just the Gray Girl. He had once attempted to paint her face from the memory gained of infrequent chance meetings in the corridor or on the stairs, but had given up in despair at the first touch of the brush to the eyes. His tubes, despite the deftest mixing, would not yield the right shade of gray. But at least he could think of her. And he did. In fact, the occupant of the adjoining studio represented the nearest approach to romance that Waldon had ever known. Sometimes, as he painted away at the things which seldom sold, and generally when he was hungriest and loneliest, he would fashion a marvelous story, in which the Gray Girl and he met and spoke. Beyond that point the details changed from time to time, but the conclusion of the story was always the same; the Gray Girl sat across the bare room, and he painted her and looked for whole minutes at a time into her wonderful eyes, and said many, many beautiful things to her, things which he was quite incapable of saying to any woman outside of a dream. Wal-

don, for a man of thirty, was woefully shy.

And so he looked straight ahead as he passed her door, and hummed his song and held himself proudly erect—despite the pains that tried to double him into a knot—lest she should discover by some occult means that he was hungry. At the entrance below, he turned to the left and hurried to the avenue where children danced blithely on the sidewalks to the strains of barrel organs, and where a mad medley of tiny, mean shops lined the noisy cobbles. Once there, he wasted no time in indecision. His was a desperate deed, for the performance of which one restaurant was as good as another. The first one he found was rather more pretentious than he could have wished it; its outer walls were painted in vivid white, and the excellence of the coffee to be found within was advertised across the broad windows in great white enameled script. Without giving himself time to repent, he passed in.

An untidy waiter waved a napkin in his face and led him to a seat. It was the only unoccupied table in the room, and Waldon devoutly hoped that the one other chair before it would remain empty. There was a heavy odor of cooking in the air, and for a moment he felt faint. But the waiter was standing impatiently beside him, and he seized a soiled menu card and pretended to study it. There was yet time to draw back, he thought. He had but to plead illness—anything—and, yes, he would still be hungry, but he would not be a thief. He glanced irresolutely at the waiter.

"You'll find the lobster cutlets good, sir."

Waldon frowned and shook his head.

Another waiter passed, his arms piled high with steaming dishes, and—again came that fateful odor of onions! Waldon sighed and leaned back in his chair.

"Bring me a sirloin with onions and—er—French fried potatoes, and—I guess that will do. Wait, bring a cup of coffee."

The waiter moved away, and Waldon

looked guiltily about the hall. He felt that everyone must know that he was penniless. When he saw that no one was observing him, he gathered courage. He was safe, it seemed, at least until he had satisfied his hunger. Afterward—well, they might cause his arrest if they wanted to; if not, he would pay when he could. He attacked the bread and butter voraciously, but when the second slice had disappeared, he laid aside his knife heroically and pushed the tempting dish away. It would never do, he thought grimly, to sell his honor merely for bread and butter. The crampy pains had increased rather than diminished, but now that dinner was at hand, he scarcely heeded them. On the whole, now that it was all irrevocably decided, he was as near happy as he had been for a long time.

But his contentment was rudely dispelled. He glanced up at a sound, to find the other chair occupied. At first a trim hat, a nod with pink roses, was alone visible; the newcomer was taking off her gloves. But Waldon knew, and his heart thumped tumultuously once or twice, and then sank again to its nethermost recesses. The Gray Girl had come to witness his predicament! To see him steal a meal like the veriest tramp from the streets! She laid a pair of slim, gray gloves beside her plate and looked up. Their eyes met. Hers held encouragement, but Waldon never knew it. His own dropped swiftly, and he contemplated flight. He wished he knew what the waiter had done with his hat. He looked for it out of the corner of his eyes, and searched with one hand beneath his chair. It was not to be seen or felt. He could not retreat bare-headed; besides, he already owed for bread and butter; as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. And, after all, he had only to delay the end of his repast until the Gray Girl had gone. Encouraged, he raised his eyes. She was looking thoughtfully down the room, and for a whole minute he feasted his eyes on the sweetness of her face. Her cheeks reminded him of the peculiar, delicate shade of pink he had once seen

on the petals of a begonia blossom. Her hair was deeply brown and curled rebelliously at the nape of her white neck and at the blue-veined temples. Her nose was small and straight, and would, could it have had its way, have given an expression of severity to the face. But the red blossom beneath smiled its pretensions to scorn, and the eyes above, gray, with tawny lights and mysterious blue-black shadows, were serious but not severe; grave but tender. Waldon worshiped those eyes.

It is doubtful if he gave thought to the girl's age. It was sufficient that she was the Gray Girl; age had no significance for him. But it had for her; she was twenty-three, and sometimes wondered at it, and despaired of ever conquering the impetuous ways that sat so illy, or so she told herself, on one who had passed out of girlhood, and who should have become sobered by much labor and a generous measure of success. Just at present she was looking thoughtfully down the length of the noisy, crowded room, and wondering half amusedly how long the tall, broad-shouldered man with the strong, aggressive chin and soft, dreamy eyes was going to stare at her. Despite her endeavors, the pink of her cheeks grew and spread. And Waldon, noting the danger signal, took alarm and turned away his gaze in sudden confusion, and fell to tracing arabesques with his fork on the coarse, stiffly starched cloth.

Then the waiter brought his dinner, and he resisted heroically the impulse to seize upon the food like the half-starved creature he was, and, instead, arranged his napkin with deliberate nicety and studied the steak for a full half minute ere he helped himself to a modest portion. Then he ate calmly, listlessly, until for a tiny space he forgot everything save his overmastering appetite, and bolted mouthful after mouthful gluttonously; and glanced up to find the eyes of the Gray Girl upon him full of grave sympathy. He flushed painfully and fumbled his fork, calling himself the hardest of names for his disgusting performance, and thereafter religiously counted ten between

each mouthful. For long he could not find the courage to even glance toward his neighbor. When he did, he found her partaking of a meager lunch of tea and tiny three-cornered sandwiches, of which lettuce appeared to form the chief component. A terrible thought assailed him. Perhaps the Gray Girl was poor and very hungry!

After that the pleasure in his own meal was gone, until in a short time the Gray Girl called for her check, produced a small purse, and from it pulled a crumpled mass of bills and coins. A quarter rolled across the cloth and lodged under the rim of Waldon's plate. He searched for it awkwardly, and dropped it into the pink palm that was waiting. The gray eyes smiled radiantly.

"Thank you," said the girl.

He muttered a reply, and stared intently at the remains of the steak until the waiter had returned with her change and he heard her thrust her chair back.

"Will you bring me some water, please?" she asked.

The waiter bore off her glass, and in that moment the Gray Girl arose and passed Waldon swiftly, her gown brushing his elbow and leaving upon the air the faintest of perfumes. And as she passed, something fluttered onto his plate. He picked it up, wonderingly, and for an instant stared at it in amazement. Then he leaped to his feet, but the Gray Girl was gone.

When the waiter returned he found Waldon tenderly folding a bill. He placed a check by the latter's elbow. Waldon glanced at it, frowned, and pushed it aside.

"I—I have no money," he muttered.

"Sir!"

Waldon looked up. The man's eyes were on the bill. For a moment Waldon hesitated. Then he threw the money onto the cloth.

"Damn you!" he muttered, savagely.

Back at the studio building, he hurried up the four long flights, and reached the Gray Girl's door out of breath, but full of determination. But no answer came to his knock, and, although he returned again and again



during the afternoon, each time with lessened courage, he did not find her.

## II.

Waldon arose early. The studio side of the street was still bathed in blue shadow when he thrust his head out of the window to breakfast heartily on the fresh, cool air. Later, he shaved himself with unusual care, and spent nearly an hour brushing his clothes and trimming the brown mustache which of late had grown sadly awry. Again, toward ten o'clock, he repeated the brushing, and went over his hands once more with pumice; there was an untidy stain of umber on one thumb. While he was yet frowning darkly and muttering "Out, out, damned spot!" the door of the next studio closed softly, and he felt his heart leap with mingled joy and fear. He went again to the little cracked shaving glass that did duty as a mirror. What he saw evidently displeased him, for he brushed his hair all over and arranged his tie in an entirely different manner. At last, when there was no further excuse for delay, he went slowly to the door. It took several moments to open it and to pass into the hall. And it was fully a minute later that he found himself rapping on the portal before him, his heart beating with discomfiting violence. Then a voice answered and he entered.

The Gray Girl was washing brushes by the window. She turned as the door opened and faced him, the spring sunlight infolding her in its golden glow. Her face was pale, but she showed no other sign of timidity.

Waldon advanced and laid an envelope on the corner of a little table, whereon stood an array of tiny cups and saucers. He had composed a form of address the day before that had seemed eminently graceful and clear. But this morning he had forgotten it. He waved a hand vaguely toward the table.

"That is the money," he said.

"The money?" she faltered, trying to express surprise.

"Yes." The first horrible shyness was wearing off, and to his amazement

he found himself looking the Gray Girl in the eyes. "I want to thank you for—for your kindness. I can't tell you how—well, how it made me feel."

"But—it was nothing," she murmured.

"It was everything," he answered, gravely. "At first I was bewildered, I think; when I looked for you you were gone. I wish——"

"Yes?" she prompted, as he paused. She had moved toward him and was smiling across the table.

"I wish you had not run away," he went on, flushing darkly. "The— the waiter saw the money, and—and so I had to pay him," he added, hurriedly. "But the rest is there, and——"

"Then I was right!" she cried.

"Right?"

"Yes, you had no money?"

"Not a cent. I—I was going to steal that dinner."

"It wouldn't have been stealing," she answered, gently. "You would have paid them later."

"Yes, but—I don't know when." His color had come back, and for the moment he had forgotten his shyness. He was wondering how she had guessed his poverty. She lifted the envelope, and at sight of the gummed flap glanced toward him in surprise.

"I was afraid to—to trust myself," he explained, shamefacedly. And then, in extenuation: "Hunger makes one see things differently, somehow."

The Gray Girl nodded sympathetically and quickly.

"I know," she said, only half aloud.

"You!"

"Yes. I used to be hungry—awfully hungry—very often—before I began to sell." Waldon dropped his gaze so that the Gray Girl would not see the look of pain that came into his eyes. The recollection of his trouble was gone on the instant, dispelled by the awful knowledge that She—the Gray Girl—had been hungry!

"But now," he said, "it is past?"

"Oh, yes; I have almost forgotten how it felt—almost, but not—not quite; I remembered yesterday." A sudden recollection of the duties of a hostess

came to her, and she sank into a low, rush-seated rocker by the table.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked.

Waldon established himself uncomfortably on the edge of a Bagdad-draped divan. The Gray Girl held the envelope in her hands, and now she looked again at it curiously, and weighed it on the pink tips of her outstretched fingers.

"How much is here?" she demanded.

He misunderstood. "All but sixty cents. You see, I had already eaten; if I had known, a third of it would have been plenty. I didn't think when I ordered that your money was to pay for it. I hope that by to-morrow—or the next day——"

"But—but—your supper and breakfast?" she exclaimed, with wide-open eyes.

"I wasn't hungry," he assured her. "Very frequently I take no supper; and as for breakfast—an early lunch, you know——"

"Oh, how could you!" she cried, almost indignantly. "Didn't you understand? I wanted you to take it all; it was only five dollars; I—I stayed away yesterday so that you could not return it to me; and all the time I thought that you were using it. Didn't you understand?"

"I thought that perhaps you meant me to accept it all as a loan," he replied, apologetically. "But—well, you see, I didn't need it. But I am grateful to you; please believe that!"

She had risen and was holding the envelope toward him. He saw the appeal in her eyes and nerved himself to a refusal.

"No, I thank you, but—I will not take any more of it."

"But why?" she asked.

"Because—because——" But there he stopped; he couldn't tell her that it was because she was the Gray Girl. "I expect some money this afternoon," he finished. She looked at him doubtfully.

"But if it doesn't come will you let me lend you a little? O-oh!" she cried, vexedly, sinking again into the rocker. "You won't; I can see that you won't!" She waited for contradiction, but Wal-

don only stared remorsefully at the rug; it was hard to refuse.

"No," he muttered, "I had rather not."

A moment of silence followed. Waldon leaned forward and studied the ineradicable spot on his thumb thoughtfully. The Gray Girl studied Waldon. "He needs food this very minute," she told herself; "he looks almost starved. But he's as obstinate as—as a child. He is a child, a great, overgrown boy," she added, the little cloud of vexation passing from her face. The object of her thought looked up.

"Would you mind telling me how you guessed that I was—that I had no money?" he asked.

"I didn't guess, I knew." She arose and stepped to the window. "If you will come here I will dispel the mystery."

He joined her at the casement, and she bade him lean out.

"What do you see?" she asked.

"An old woman and a pug dog in the foreground," he answered, with a momentary respite from his gravity; "a huckster's cart laden with greens in the middle distance, and——"

"No, no," she laughed, "but right at hand there. Don't you see? Isn't there a window there?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is the window of your room."

"My room?" He leaned further out and craned his neck. She frowned and laid a nervous hand on his shoulder. "Yes, I see." A corner of his tumbled couch was visible. He drew back. "But still I'm afraid I don't understand——"

"No? I'll explain. Perhaps you don't know it, but it is a fact that you talk aloud very often." He shook his head.

"No, I don't think I knew it."

"Well, you do. Since the weather has been warm, you know, I paint here close up to the window, and—and, though I have not meant to listen, yet I have heard what you were saying several times; particularly yesterday." She colored and looked up at him doubt-

fully. "I'm afraid that I tried to listen yesterday; was it very mean?"

"No," he replied, gravely, "it was kindness."

"Oh! But it wasn't just curiosity; I want you to believe that, at least. After I learned that you were going without food, I thought that I might help you; and I wanted to be certain first. I saw you go out and followed you. I meant to offer you the money, but you looked so forbidding——" She paused and laughed a little tremulously at the recollection; and he smiled back, and for the first time saw her eyes with the added glory of sunlight in their depths. "I didn't know what to do," she continued, hiding the eyes with brown lashes, "and so, in desperation, I just threw the bill at you and ran! It was a silly thing to do, but—and then you spoiled it all by not using it," she added, aggrievedly.

"It wasn't spoiled for me," he said, rather breathlessly. "It meant so much! I—I think I was a little discouraged yesterday; but afterward, after I came back here, I was happy!"

She moved a step away and half turned. He thought she was studying the half-completed canvas on the easel. In truth, she was smiling tremulously, and only saw the canvas as a blurred mass of pinks and greens. He wondered if he was tiring her with his talk, and kept silence until she said, without turning:

"I am glad of that. It is terrible—discouragement."

"Yes," he answered. "You see, I know nobody here; except Carletson on the floor below. And—but I fear I am boring you?"

"No," she cried, eagerly, "I, too, know what it is to be without friends. Though now, since my pictures have become popular, it is different, and I know a great many persons; I think some of them are really friends. But you—you have friends, relatives somewhere?"

"Yes, I have a mother and a brother; but they seem a long way off sometimes; they live in Texas; that is my home. New York is so big," he added.

"Bigger than Texas?" she asked, smilingly.

"A thousand times!"

"Yes; I know the feeling; it lasts until one has made one's first success; then one grows to love the great, beautiful, ugly place; and all the more, perhaps, for its very cruelty."

"I suppose that is true," he answered, doubtfully. "Of course, I was a fool to get discouraged; it only makes it worse. And then success will come in time. And—yes, I suppose success makes up for it all at last."

"Does it seem so very far away?" she asked, sympathetically.

"It did until yesterday," he answered, gravely. The color crept into her cheeks even while she told herself, vexedly, that he had had no thought of compliment.

"Do you care to see some of my work?" she asked, hurriedly.

"If you will allow it," he answered, eagerly.

She tore the paper from a canvas just back from the framer, and placed it upon an easel. The subject was a tangled festoon of great yellow roses against a background of cool, deep green. There was a vigor and warmth about it that startled him.

"Cloth of gold," he muttered.

She nodded. He experienced a sensation of regret. Until to-day she had been only the Gray Girl; now it was as though she had become some one else, a person beyond his reach.

"Success was bound to come to you," he said, softly. "You are a genius." She flushed.

"People have said that," she answered, "but I—I don't know; it is hard to believe it. You see, I can do only flowers, and it is just a knack; I can't help doing it. It is so easy for me," she added, almost apologetically. She brought forth a half dozen unframed pictures for him to see. They were all flower pieces, and in all of them there was the same virility, almost masculine vigor.

"It is so queer," she went on. "I always wanted to do portraits. I tried so long and worked and worked, paint-

ing flowers in odd moments to keep from starving. Well, the flowers sold—always—but the portraits—I saw the uselessness of it two years ago, and stopped. Then people began to talk about my roses and orchids, and orders came faster and faster, until now I have more than I can do."

He stopped and read the name in the corner of the canvas.

"Yes, I have seen your work praised," he said. "But I didn't know that you were 'Elizabeth Emmons.'"

"No? I suppose it is silly, but I would so willingly go through it all again if only I might hope to succeed at portraiture. Can you understand that?"

"Yes. I sometimes long for the unattainable myself. Once I thought to paint landscapes, but I soon found that if I was to have them even looked at, I must paint figures into them, and tell a story. But I'm content to do that now—usually; sometimes I rebel."

"Will you show me your work some day?"

"If—if you'd care to see it," he answered, flushing with pleasure. "But you mustn't expect much; besides, I've very little to show at present, nothing but a few black-and-whites. I had to give up colors; they wouldn't sell. I've been doing a little magazine work of late; it pays well, and I like it, but there isn't much to be had. Sometimes—sometimes I think people don't understand." He stopped, looking frowningly out into the sun-bathed street.

"I know," answered the girl; "the Great Intelligent Public is frightfully ignorant, and often extremely irritating." She had begun to busy herself at the little table. "Will you have sugar?" she asked.

"Please," he answered, mechanically.

"Have none of your canvases sold?"

"Not one. Heaven knows they're cheap enough! And they—they're good! I know, even if they're mine. I know that they're *true* and *real*, and—but that doesn't matter, I suppose. I've given up expecting them to sell. I've about decided to give up the West and do Central Park and the swan-boats,

and nurse maids, and pink and blue children rolling hoops. Perhaps," he went on, smiling grimly—"perhaps I might discover a brand new park that no one has ever painted! Wouldn't that be luck?"

"No, it wouldn't," she answered, sharply. "And please don't talk that way; it's so easy to be bitter and sarcastic when things go wrong; you're big enough and strong enough to—to brush trouble aside and go on smiling. A woman has some excuse for making faces and calling names, but you—why, if life was all trouble, and the world held nothing but obstacles, you could push through—and on—and up!"

"By Jove!" he muttered, with tingling nerves.

"And you couldn't change even if you wanted to," she went on. "You've got to go your own way, do your own things. And some day you'll wake up to find the world down below you; and you will be on the summit they call Fame. And until then you must work—work; and grit your teeth and—and swear! Only don't give up; promise me you won't!"

"I won't," he answered, simply. Then: "It's good of you to care."

"No, it isn't. Here's your reward for promising."

He accepted the cup of tea, and found a chair by the table whereon was spread a tempting display of biscuits and cakes and a glass dish of sliced ham. The Gray Girl talked rapidly, watching with concealed delight his vigorous attack on the slender lunch. But suddenly he stared at his cup and seemed about to set it aside.

"Please don't," she cried. "I know I've been wicked. I've made you forget yourself and eat lunch with me. But it's too late now; the awful deed is done. Won't you please go on?"

"Yes, if you'll give me another cup of tea. It is tea?"

"Why, of course."

"It doesn't taste like mine," he told her. "I used to make tea on an oil stove; I think it tasted more of the oil than anything else. This is like nectar."

"No, it's like tea. I'm sure nice tea

must be lots better than nectar, although I've never tasted the latter."

Presently he set down his cup and arose.

"I fear I've kept you from your work," he said, apologetically. "It has been so good to have some one to talk to that I have forgotten about time."

"No, you haven't kept me from anything. And as for talking—I just love to talk myself." She took up the envelope again and held it toward him. "And—won't you—don't you think you could take this and use it until your money came? I should be so happy if you would!"

"No," he replied. "But please don't think I'm starving to death. I don't think I could eat anything now for days. And I shall get a check this afternoon, I have no doubt. But I thank you." He stood at the open doorway, turning the knob nervously back and forth. He wanted permission to come again, but could find no way of asking for it. Perhaps the Gray Girl guessed the reason for his embarrassment.

"I hope you will come and see me sometimes," she said, rather breathlessly, blushing a little. "We're such near neighbors, you know."

Waldon murmured his thanks, and the door closed behind him. The Gray Girl, left alone, moved to the tea table and scrutinized the glass dish and the biscuit plate. What she saw apparently pleased her, for she nodded her head once or twice. Then she moved to the open window and, leaning against the casement, listened intently for several minutes. Presently from the next room came the sound of whistling. The tune was a silly one, mere musical doggerel, but the Gray Girl, as she turned away, hummed it herself softly and smiled contentedly.

### III.

Waldon's door was tight closed when the Gray Girl reached her studio the next morning, and she thought him out until, later, she heard his footsteps on the bare floor. As the clock in the church tower across the roofs struck its

twelve sonorous strokes, Waldon's door opened and closed, and she heard him tramp down the corridor, whistling blithely.

"He has gone out to lunch," she told herself, gladly.

She would have been surprised could she have seen him a few minutes later seated on a bench in the neighboring square, with nothing more edible in sight than a flock of lively sparrows. After twenty minutes by the church clock, he arose and crept listlessly back, passing with the same noisy bravado as before the door of the Gray Girl, who sipped her tea and smiled happily as she heard.

The light at her window failed early that afternoon, and she tidied up her room, for on the morrow visitors were coming. A great vase of white lilacs stood on a table by the easel. She examined them critically; then, taking them from the water, she laid them on a newspaper and put them outside her door for the janitor to remove. A couple of newly framed canvases were placed to advantage, and then five o'clock struck, and she donned hat and gloves. At the last, the dust cloth caught her eye and she went to the window and shook it vigorously. But presently she let it hang limply in her hand while she listened for sounds from the next casement. She heard nothing, and with a little frown she gave a final glance about the studio, closed the window, and went out. The process of locking the door that evening was an unusually noisy one.

From his window Waldon saw her emerge from the entrance below. He had been watching for a long time. Seizing his hat, he hurried after. When he reached the street she was halfway to the avenue, and he suited his pace to hers, and followed. After she had reached the corner and had turned uptown, he cut down the distance between them, for on the crowded thoroughfare the danger of being seen by her was slight. Once or twice she paused at a shop window, and Waldon followed suit a few yards distant, hungrily making the most of the opportunity to see

her face. Further uptown she entered a tea room. It was a long wait that followed, for the man outside, and the attractively dressed window, with its appetizing array of bread, cakes and culinary dainties, drove him to the further side of the street. Passers shot curious glances now and then toward the tall, broad-shouldered figure in shabby clothes and with pale, thin face. But Waldon heeded naught save the entrance opposite. After a while the Gray Girl came out, and his heart leaped into his throat as he saw her gazing directly toward him. But she had not seen him, for she passed uptown again, and he followed.

At the entrance to a florist's, flanked by masses of early-blooming shrubs in pots and boxes, she disappeared, and Waldon, advancing cautiously, saw her through the great window in conversation with a clerk. The soft glow of opalescent lights shone down upon her, and as she leaned across the marble counter her face found for background a feathery cluster of ferns. Waldon forgot his hunger and his faintness, and feasted his eyes, his face pressed against the glass. There was small likelihood of detection, for a veritable forest of greenery was between them. He saw the clerk shake his head. The Gray Girl turned with disappointed face, glanced irresolutely at her watch, and came toward the door. Waldon drew aside into the half shadows of the spring twilight, and she passed out and joined the stream of homeward-bound humanity. Waldon entered the store.

"The lady who was just here," he said to the clerk. "You didn't have what she wanted?"

The other glanced curiously at the questioner.

"A friend of yours?" Waldon nodded.

"No, we didn't have them. She wanted the white. We had plenty this morning, but they are all gone."

"White—roses?" The clerk looked suspicious.

"White lilacs."

"Oh! But I suppose I—she can get them somewhere?"

"Perhaps. We will have some more in the morning. Or you might find them over on Third or Fourth Avenue."

Waldon thanked him and went out. The city was pallid with the first white twinkling of electric lights. Overhead a great arc lamp sizzled noisily ere it settled down to its night's work. Lighted cars trundled by and cabs flitted hither and thither on noiseless tires, the tiny sparks of their lamps looking like will-o'-the-wisps against the trees of the park. It seemed an appallingly long distance to Third Avenue, for Waldon was weak and faint. Once he found himself staring stupidly into the glaring interior of a restaurant. How long he had been there he didn't know; his head felt as though it belonged to somebody else. He passed a hand over his eyes and set resolutely forth again. When the avenue was reached fate was kind to him. Not a stone-throw away was a flower store, and in the window was a tall jar of white lilacs. He stared stupidly at them as they lay before him on the counter.

"How many do you want?" asked the florist.

"I'll take them all."

"Shall I send them?" Waldon shook his head. When they were wrapped in several sheets of tissue paper they made a formidable bundle, but Waldon gathered it into his arms and started for the door.

"I beg pardon, sir, you've forgotten to pay."

Waldon stopped and his heart sank. Irresolutely he looked into the street, weighing confusedly his chances of making escape. Then he turned and, summoning courage, said gravely:

"I beg pardon; I meant to ask you to charge them; I am rather forgetful."

"Of course, sir. Let me see, what is the name?"

He gave the name and address and waited, desperately nervous, while a directory was consulted. A minute later he was slowly retracing his steps across town, the precious bundle clasped tightly in his arms. When the square was reached, such a desperate weakness seized upon him that he left the side-



walk, and, reaching one of the benches, sank down wearily. The bundle rolled unnoticed from his fingers.

When he aroused from the lethargy the sky was a blue-black vault picked out with myriads of silver stars. Up the street an illuminated dial proclaimed the time to be a quarter past eight. He rescued the bundle and arose. He felt stronger for his rest, and was able to walk without stumbling.

The studio entrance was dimly lighted and the great empty corridors were dark and silent, save where, on the third floor, a flood of golden light streamed through a transom and the sound of men's laughter made itself faintly heard. On his own floor, as he leaned dizzy and out of breath against the banisters, the problem of the disposal of the flowers confronted him for the first time.

What forces had compelled her back to the studio that evening the girl did not know. A restlessness had taken possession of her after dinner, and her wandering footsteps, at first leading her toward the avenue, had at length brought her to the studio building. Her thoughts had paid little heed to her feet; they were all for her neighbor, the big, pleasant-faced, weary-eyed man who, after all, was only a great, overgrown boy. Her thoughts had of late dwelt very constantly upon him, often to her alarm. Had she questioned herself, she might have owned to a neighborly interest in Waldon; only that. But her heart had found its first romance—heretofore she had been too busy working and struggling for romance to find her out—and was not to be denied. To-night, as she climbed the interminable stairs, the maternal instinct that slumbers in the woman-breast was astir; could she have fed him and made him comfortable, and, perhaps, shed a few tears over him, she would have been quite happy. There was a pleasant warmth at her heart as she went down the corridor toward her room, and an unaccustomed flush in her cheeks, which may have been due to the effort of climbing the stairs. When she found

that no light shone through his transom, and that no sound reached her from his open window, she acknowledged a distinct disappointment, and wondered at it. She did not light her gas, but sat there in the darkness for some time, questioning and dreaming. And it was not until his form loomed against the lighter darkness of the hallway at the door that she knew of his approach. With a little catch at her throat, she waited for him to pass on.

For an instant he stood as though awaiting invitation to enter, and she wondered if he saw her there in the darkness. Then, with a lurch, he came into the room and stood, swaying slightly, by the table. Fearful of she knew not what, she arose noiselessly and went slowly toward him. He saw her then, her slight form suddenly appearing against the oblong of the window, and he came on.

"Gray Girl," he murmured, softly, as one who is half asleep.

She wanted to retreat before him, but something compelled her to stand motionless. His hands went out and found her. She was trembling, but he did not know it. His arms drew her to him until she was close against his breast.

"Gray Girl," he murmured again, with infinite tenderness. She strove to draw away, a sudden panic assailing her, but his arms were like iron bands binding her to him. "Gray Girl!" he whispered, as though the mere words brought him all delight. Then she felt his face against hers and—he had kissed her, tenderly, reverently. A sob broke from her, and she struggled away. His hands dropped from her, and something fell to the floor with a rustle of paper. There was an instant of silence. Then:

"You are real!" he cried, suddenly, his voice vibrant with surprise and consternation. Then: "I thought you were—were—" he passed his hand across his brow as though to brush aside the mists, swayed and sank exhaustedly onto the couch. In an instant she was beside him—bending, crooning like a mother to her child. Understanding came to her in the moment, and a great pity and love.



# AN EDITORIAL

AN APPRECIATION AND A SYNOPSIS OF  
DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS' SERIAL, "THE DELUGE"

On another page of this number of Ainslee's the second installment of David Graham Phillips' new serial, "The Deluge," is begun. Doubtless those who read the opening chapters last month fully appreciate the significance of this story.

Mr. Phillips has selected as the background of his story the scene of human activity that goes by the name of Wall Street, upon which the attention of the public is now, more than ever, concentrated. The reasons for the almost feverish interest manifested in the Street's doings are many, it can be attributed to no single one of them. Some of them are the intensely commercial spirit of the age, the disasters that this spirit has brought upon individuals in the pursuit of wealth, the dramatic scenes enacted in the gain and loss of fortunes, the personality of the leading characters, and the expectations aroused by promised exposures of the methods of speculators.

All this presents a rich field to a gifted novelist. Mr. Phillips does not enter this field for the first time. In "The Cost" he made a beginning on the theme of the Street. The book was received as one which gave a strikingly realistic picture of the methods and personality of the sort of men who are dominant in the manipulation of the stock market.

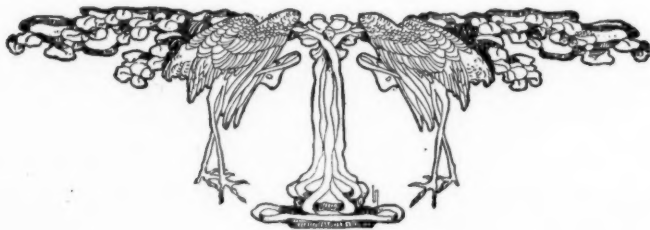
"The Deluge" is a further development of Mr. Phillips' peculiar talent in handling the industrial theme in fiction. It has turned out to be a wonderfully graphic description of the typical financier of the twentieth century—or at least what he may be expected to become if the man as we know him to-day follows the logical course of evolution.

He has taken as the central figure of his story Matthew Blacklock, essentially a self-made man, who by his utter disregard of the conventionalities of the Street has made himself a power to be reckoned with. He is a man of great natural force, immense egotism, a greed for notoriety that is insatiable, with a scrupulous sense of honor as he understands the word and thoroughly convinced of his own integrity of purpose. He has two ambitions: first to enter into the inner circle of the combination that controls high finance, and second to become one of the elect in society.

The opening chapters explain these ambitions and indicate the means by which they are to be gratified. The magnate of the financial world is Roebuck, whose tool Blacklock has been, and the latter's demands upon Roebuck are narrated. He has become impatient and wants to be admitted to partnership in Roebuck's big undertakings.

The social ambition of Blacklock is awakened and stimulated by his meeting with Anita Ellersly, the sister of a young society man who has received many financial favors from Blacklock.

The latter finally succeeds in his wish so far as to receive an invitation to dinner at the Ellerslys', which is given for reasons that are obvious. It is made plain to him that his intentions with respect to Anita are extremely distasteful to her, and after an evening spent under a tremendous nervous strain he leaves the house exhausted and depressed.



# THE DELUGE

A STORY OF MODERN FINANCE

By David Graham Phillips

Author of "The Cost," "Golden Fleece," "The Plum Tree," Etc.

[FOR A SYNOPSIS OF FIRST INSTALLMENT SEE PRECEDING PAGE.]

IV—(Continued.)



'LL give her up!" I said—and I think I said it aloud, so upset was I.

I am a man of impulse, of generous impulse—and that weakness has cost me much.

But I have trained myself not to be a creature of impulse, at least not in matters of importance. Without that patient and painful schooling, I shouldn't have got where I now am; probably I'd still be blacking boots, or sheet-writing for some bookmaker, or clerking it for some broker.

Before I got to my rooms, the night air and my habit of the "sober second thought" had cooled me back to rationality. "I want her, I need her," I was saying to myself. "I am worthier of her than are those mincing manikins she has been bred to regard as men. She is for me—she belongs to me. I've put my seal on her. And I'll abandon her to no smirking puppet who'd wear her as a donkey would a diamond. Why should I do myself and her an injury simply because she has been too badly brought up to know her own interest?"

And now I can see all the smooth frauds, all the weak people who never have purposes or passions worthy of the name, all the finicky, finger-dusting gentry with the "fine souls," who flatter themselves with the notion that their timidity is the squeamishness of su-

perior sensibilities—I can see all these feeble folk fluttering their feeble, useless fingers in horror of me. "The brute!" they cry. "The bounder!" Well, I accept the names quite cheerfully. Those are the epithets the wishy-washy always hurl at the strong; they put me in the small and proudly aristocratic class of the men who *do*. I proudly avow myself no subscriber to the code that was made by the shearers to encourage the sheep to keep on being nice docile animals, trotting meekly up to be shorn or slaughtered as their masters may decide. I harm no man, and no woman; but neither do I pause to weep over any man or any woman who flings himself or herself upon my steady spear. I try to be courteous and considerate to all; but I do not stop when some fellow who has something that belongs to me shouts "Rude!" at me to sheer me off.

At the same time, she, with her delicate beauty, her quiet, distinctive, high-bred manner, had brought it home to me that in certain respects I was ignorant and crude—as who would not have been, brought up as was I? I knew there was something between my roughness of the uncut individuality and the smoothness of the planed and sandpaper nonentity of her "set"—that something between, and better than either, better because more effective.

It was with this clearly in mind that I sent for my trainer, Monson, the morning after my call. He was one of those spare, wiry Englishmen, with skin like tanned and painted hide—brown

except where the bones seem about to push their sharp angles through, and there a frosty, winter-apple red. He dressed like a Deadwood gambler, he talked like a stable boy; but for all that, you couldn't fail to see he was a gentleman born and bred. Yes, he was a gentleman, though he mixed profanity into his ordinary flow of conversation more liberally than did I when I was in a rage.

I stood up before him, threw my coat back, thrust my thumbs into my trousers' pockets and slowly turned about like a ready made tailor's dummy. "Monson," said I, "what do you think of me?"

He looked me over as if I were a horse he was about to buy. "Sound, I'd say," was his verdict. "Good wind—uncommon good wind. A goer, and a stayer. Not a lump. Not a hair out of place." He laughed. "Action a bit high perhaps—for the track. But a grand reach."

"I know all that," said I. "You miss my point. Suppose you wanted to enter me for—say, for the Society Sweepstakes—what'd you say then?"

"Um—um," he muttered, reflectively. "That's different."

"Don't I look—sort of—new—as if the varnish was still sticky and might come off on the ladies' dresses and on the fine furniture?"

"Oh—that!" said he, dubiously. "But all those kinds of things are matters of taste."

"Out with it!" I commanded. "Don't be afraid. I'm not one of those damn fools that ask for criticism when they want only flattery, as you ought to know by this time. I'm aware of my good points, know how good they are better than anybody else in the world. And I suspect my weak points—always did. I've got on chiefly because I made people tell me to my face what they'd rather have grinned over behind my back."

"What's your game?" asked Monson. "I'm in the dark."

"I'll tell you, Monson. I hired you to train horses. Now I want to hire

you to train me, too. As it's double work, it's double pay."

"Say on," said he, "and say it slow."

"I want to marry," I explained. "I want to inspect all the offerings before I decide. You are to train me so that I can go among the herds that'd shy off from me if I wasn't on to their little ways."

He looked suspiciously at me, doubtless thinking this some new development of "American humor."

"I mean it," I assured him. "I'm going to train, and train hard. I've got no time to lose. I must be on my way down the aisle inside of three months. I give you a free hand. I'll do just what you say."

"The job's out of my line," he protested.

"I know better," said I. "I've always seen the parlor under the stable in you. We'll begin right away. What do you think of these clothes?"

"Well—they're not exactly noisy," he said. "But—they're far from silent. That waistcoat—" He stopped and gave me another nervous, timid look. He found it hard to believe that a man of my sort, so self-assured, would stand the truth from a man of his second-fiddle sort.

"Go on," I commanded. "Speak out! Mowbray Langdon had on one twice as loud the other day at the track."

"But, perhaps you'll remember, it was only his waistcoat that was loud—not he himself. Now, a man of your manner and voice and—you've got a look out of the eyes that'd wake the dead all by itself. People can feel you coming before they hear you. When they feel and hear and see all together—it's like a brass band in scarlet uniform, with a seven-foot, sky-blue drum major. If your hair wasn't so black and your eyes so sharp, and your teeth so big and strong and white, and your jaw such a—such a—*jaw*—"

"I see the point," said I. And I did. "You'll find you won't need to tell me many things twice. I've got a busy day before me here; so we'll have to suspend this until you come to dine with me at eight—at my rooms. I want you

to put in the time well. Go to my house in the country and then up to my apartment; take my valet with you; look through all my belongings—shirts, ties, socks, trousers, waistcoats, clothes of every kind. Throw out every rag you think doesn't fit in with what I want to be. How's my grammar?"

I was proud of it; I had been taking more or less pains with my mode of speech for a dozen years. "Rather too good," said he. "But that's better than making the breaks that aren't regarded as good form."

"Good form!" I exclaimed. "That's it. That's what I want. What does 'good form' mean?"

He laughed. "You can search me," said he. "I could easily tell you—anything else. It's what everybody knows when he sees it, and nobody knows how to describe. It's like the difference between a cultivated 'jimson' weed and a wild one."

"Like the difference between Mowbray Langdon and me," I suggested, good-naturedly. "How about my manners?"

"Not so bad," said he. "Not so rotten bad. But—when you're polite, you're a little too polite; when you're not polite, you—"

"Show where I came from too plainly?" said I. "Speak right out—hit good and hard. Am I too frank for 'good form'?"

"You needn't bother about that," he assured me. "Say whatever comes into your head—only, be sure the right sort of things comes into your head. Don't talk too much about yourself, for instance. It's good form to think about yourself all the time, it's bad form to let people see it—in your talk. Say as little as possible about your business and about what you've got. Don't be too lavish with the I's and the my's."

"That's harder," said I. "I'm a man who has always minded his own business, and cared for nothing else. What could I talk about, except myself?"

"Blest if I know," replied he. "Where you want to go, the last thing people mind is their own business—in talk, at least. But you'll get on all right

if you don't worry too much about it. You've got natural independence, and an original way of putting things, and common sense. Don't be afraid."

"Afraid!" said I. "I never knew what it was to be afraid."

"Your nerve'll carry you through," he assured me. "Nerve'll take a man anywhere."

"You never said a truer thing in your life," said I. "It'll take him wherever he wants, and, after he's there, it'll get him whatever he wants." And with that I, thinking of my plans and of how sure I was of success, began to march up and down the office with my chest thrown out—until I caught myself at it. That stopped me, set me off in a laugh at my own expense, he joining in a bit too heartily, as I thought, though I did not venture to check him.

So ended the first lesson—the first of a long series. I soon saw that Monson was being most useful to me—far more useful than if he were a "perfect gentleman" with nothing of the track and stable and back stairs about him. Being a sort of betwixt and between, he could appreciate my needs as they could not have been appreciated by a fellow who had never lived in the rough-and-tumble I had fought my way up through. And being at bottom a real gentleman, and not one of those nervous, snobbish make-believes, he wasn't so busy trying to hide his own deficiencies from me that he couldn't teach me anything. He wasn't afraid of being found out, as Sam—or perhaps, even Langdon—would have been in the same circumstances. I wonder if there is another country where so many gentlemen and ladies are born, or another where so many of them have their natural gentility educated out of them.

I had Monson coaching me twice each week day—early in the morning and again after business hours until bed time. Also he spent the whole of every Saturday and Sunday with me. He developed astonishing dexterity as a teacher, and as soon as he realized that I had no false pride and was thoroughly in earnest, he handled me without gloves—like a boxing teacher who finds

that his pupil has the grit of a professional. It was easy enough for me to grasp the theory of my new business—it was nothing more than "Be natural." But the rub came in making myself naturally of the right sort. I had—as I suppose every man of intelligence and decent instincts has—a disposition to be friendly and simple. But my manner was by nature what you might call abrupt. Monson's not very easy task was to teach me the subtle difference between the abrupt that is polite and the abrupt that is rude, the abrupt that injects a tonic into social intercourse and the abrupt that makes the other person shut up with a feeling of having been insulted.

Then, there was the matter of good taste in conversation. He found, as I soon saw, that my everlasting self-assertiveness was beyond cure. As I said to him: "I'm afraid you might easier succeed in reducing my chest measure." But we worked away at it, and perhaps my readers may discover even in this narrative, though it is necessarily egotistic, evidence of at least an honest effort not to be baldly boastful. Monson would have liked to make of me a self-deprecating sort of person—such as he was himself, with the result that the other fellow always got the prize and he got left. But I would have none of it. "How are people to know about you, if you don't tell 'em?" I argued. "Don't you yourself admit that men take a man at his own valuation less a slight discount, and that women take him at his own valuation plus an allowance for his supposed modesty?"

"Cracking yourself up is vulgar, nevertheless," declared the Englishman. "It's the chief reason why we on the other side look on you Americans as a lot of vulgarians——"

"And are in awe of our superior cleverness," I put in.

He laughed. "Well, do the best you can," said he. "Only, you really must not brag and swagger, and you must get out of the habit of talking louder than anyone else."

In the matter of dress, his task was easy. I had a fancy for bright colors

and for strong contrasts; but I know I never indulged in clashes and discords. It was simply that in clothes I had the same taste as in pictures—the taste that made me prefer Rubens to Rembrandt. We cast out of my wardrobe everything in the least doubtful; and I gave away my jeweled canes, my pins and links and buttons for shirts and waistcoats except plain gold and pearls. I even left off the magnificent diamond I had worn for years on my little finger—but I didn't give away that stone; I put it by for resetting into an engagement ring. However, when I was as quietly dressed as it was possible for a gentleman to be, he still studied me dubiously, when he thought I wasn't seeing him. And I recall that he said once: "It's your face, Blacklock. If you could only manage to look less like a Spanish bull dashing into the ring, gazing joyfully about for somebody to gore and toss!"

"But I can't," said I. "And I wouldn't, if I could—because that's *me*!"

One Saturday he brought a dancing master down to my country place—Dawn Hill, which I bought of the Dumont estate and completely remodeled. I saw what the man's business was the instant I looked at him. I left him in the hall and took Monson into my den.

"Not for me!" I protested. "There's where I draw the line."

"You don't understand," he urged. "This fellow, this Alphonse Lynch, out in the hall here, isn't going to teach you dancing so that you may dance, but so that you shall be less awkward in strange company."

"My walk suits me," said I. "And I don't fall over furniture or trip people up."

"True enough," he answered. "But you haven't the complete control of your body that'll make you unconscious of it when you're suddenly shot by a butler into a room full of people you suspect of being unfriendly and critical."

Not until he used his authority as trainer-in-full-charge, did I yield. It may seem absurd to some for a serious man like me solemnly to caper about in



imitation of a scraping, grimacing French-Irishman; but I know that Monson was right, and I haven't in the least minded the ridicule he has brought on me by tattling this and the other things everywhere, since he turned against me. It's nothing new under the sun for the crowds of chuckleheads to laugh where they ought to applaud; their habit is to laugh and to applaud in the wrong places. There's no part of my career that I'm prouder of than the whole of this thorough course of education in the trifles that are yet not trifles. To have been ignorant is no disgrace; the disgrace comes when one persists in ignorance and glories in it.

Yet those who make the most pretensions in this topsy-turvy of a world regard it as a disgrace to have been obscure and ignorant, and pride themselves upon their persistence in their own kind of obscurity and ignorance! No wonder the few strong men do about as they please with such a race of nincompoopery. If they didn't grow old and tired and indifferent, what would they not do?

## V.

All this time I was giving myself—or thought I was giving myself—chiefly to my business, as usual. I know now that the new interests had in fact crowded the things downtown far into the background, had impaired my judgment, had suspended my common sense; but I had no inkling of this then. The most important matter that was occupying me downtown was pushing Textile up toward par. Langdon's doubts, little though they influenced me, still made enough of an impression to cause me to test the market. I sold for him at ninety, as he had directed; I sold in quantity every day. But no matter how much I unloaded, the price showed no tendency to break.

"This," said I to myself, "is a testimonial to the skill with which I prepared for my bull campaign." And that seemed to me—all unsuspicious as I then was—a sufficient explanation of the steadiness of the stock which I had

worked to establish in the public confidence.

I felt that, if my matrimonial plans should turn out as I confidently expected, I should need a much larger fortune than I had—for I was determined that my wife should have an establishment second to none. Accordingly, I enlarged my original plan. I had intended to keep close to Langdon in that plunge; I believed I controlled the market, but I hadn't been in Wall Street twenty years without learning that the worst thunderbolts fall from cloudless skies. Without being in the least suspicious of Langdon, and simply acting on the general principle that surprise and treachery are part of the code of high finance, I had prepared to guard, first, against being taken in the rear by a secret change of plan on Langdon's part, and second, against being involved and overwhelmed by a sudden secret attack on him from some associate of his who might think he had laid himself open to successful raiding.

The market is especially dangerous toward Christmas and in the spring—toward Christmas the big fellows often put up the stocks or let the stocks go up so that they can sell and get the money for their big Christmas gifts and alms; toward spring the motive is, of course, the extra summer expenses of their families and the commencement gifts to colleges. It was now late in the spring.

I say, I had intended to be cautious. I abandoned caution and rushed in boldly, feeling that the market was in general safe and that Textile was under my control—and that I was one of the kings of high finance, with my lucky star in the zenith. I decided to continue my bull campaign two weeks after I had unloaded for Langdon, to continue it until the stock was at par. I had no difficulty in pushing it to ninety-seven, and I was not alarmed when I found myself loaded up with it, quoted at ninety-eight for the preferred and thirty for the common. I assumed that I was practically its only supporter and that it would slowly settle back as I slowly withdrew my support.

I was surprised when the stock did not yield immediately to my efforts to depress it. I sold more heavily; Textile continued to show a tendency to rise. I sold still more heavily; it broke a point or two, then steadied and rose again. Instead of sending out along my secret lines for inside information, as I should have done, and would have done had I not been in a state of hypnotized judgment—I went to Langdon! I who had been studying those scoundrels for twenty odd years, and dealing directly with and for them for ten years!

He wasn't at his office; they told me there that they didn't know whether he was at his town house or at his place in the country—"probably in the country," said his downtown secretary, with elaborate carelessness. "He wouldn't be likely to stay away from the office or not to send for me, if he were in town, would he?"

It takes an uncommon good liar to lie to me when I'm on the alert. As I was determined to see Langdon, I was in so far on the alert. And I felt the fellow was lying. "That's reasonable," said I. "Call me up, if you hear from him. I want to see him—important, but not immediate." And I went away, having left the impression that I would make no further effort.

Incredible though it may seem, especially to those who know how careful I am to guard every point and to see in every friend a possible foe, I still did not suspect that smooth, that profound scoundrel. I do not use these epithets with heat. I flatter myself that I am a connoisseur of finesse and can look even at my own affairs with judicial impartiality. And Langdon was, and is now, such a past master of finesse that he compels the admiration even of his victims. He's like one of those fabled Damascus blades. When he takes a leg off, the victim forgets to suffer in his amazement at the cleanness of the wound, in his incredulity that the leg is no longer part of him. "Langdon," said I to myself, "is a sly dog. No doubt he's busy about some woman, and has covered his tracks." Yet I ought,

in the circumstances, instantly to have suspected that he was keeping out of my way.

I went up to his house. You no doubt have often seen and often admired its beautiful façade, so simple that it hides its own magnificence from all but experienced eyes, so perfect in its proportions that it hides the vastness of the palace of which it is the face. I have heard men say: "I'd like to have a house—a moderate-sized house—one about the size<sup>2</sup> of Mowbray Langdon's—though perhaps a little more elegant, not so plain."

That's typical of the man. You have to look closely at him, to study him, before you appreciate how he has combined a thousand details of manner and dress into an appearance which, while it cannot but impress the ordinary man with its distinction, suggests to all but the very observant the modestest plainness and simplicity. How few people there are who realize that simplicity must be profound, complex, studied, not to be and to appear crude and coarse. In those days that truth had just begun to dawn on me.

"Mr. Langdon isn't at home," said the servant.

I had been at his house once before; I knew he occupied the left side—the whole of the second floor, so shut off that it not only had a separate entrance, but also could not be reached by those in the right side of the house without descending to the entrance hall and ascending the left stairway.

"He has an appointment with me," said I.

"I'm sorry, sir, but he isn't at home," repeated the butler.

"Just take my card to his private secretary, to Mr. Rathburn," said I. "Mr. Langdon has doubtless left a message for me."

The butler hesitated, yielded. With that insulting reluctance, and with that insulting glance round at all the portable costly furnishings within view, he put me in the reception room off the entrance hall. I waited a few seconds, then adventured the stairway to the left, up which he had disappeared. I

entered the small salon in which Langdon had received me on my other visit. From the direction of an open door, I heard his voice—he was saying: “I am not at home. There’s no message.”

And still I did not realize that it was I he was avoiding!

“It’s no use now, Langdon,” I called, cheerfully. “Beg pardon for seeming to intrude. I misunderstood—or didn’t hear where the servant said I was to wait. However, no harm done. So long! I’m off.” But I made no move toward the door by which I had entered; instead, I advanced a few feet nearer the door from which his voice had come.

After a brief—a very brief—pause there came in Langdon’s voice—laughing, not a trace of annoyance: “I might have known! Come in, Matt!”

I entered the room, with an amused glance at the butler, who was giving over his heavy countenance to a delightful exhibition of disgust, contempt and discomfiture. It was Langdon’s sitting room. He had had the magnificent carved antique oak interior of a room in an old French palace torn out and transported to New York and set up for him. I had made a study of that sort of thing, and at Dawn Hill had done something toward realizing my own ideas of the splendid. But a glance showed me that I was far surpassed. What I had done seemed in comparison tawdry, crude, like the composition of a schoolboy beside an essay by Goldsmith or Hazlitt.

And in the midst of this quiet splendor sat, or rather lounged, Langdon, reading the newspapers. He was dressed in a dark blue velvet house suit with facings and cords of blue silk a shade or so lighter than the suit. I had always thought him handsome; he looked now like a god. He was smoking a cigarette in an oriental holder nearly a foot long; but the air of the room, so perfect was the ventilation, instead of being scented with tobacco, had the odor of some fresh, clean, slightly saline perfume.

I think what was in my mind must have shown in my face, must have sub-

ly flattered him; for, when I looked at him, he was giving me a look of genuine friendly kindness. “This is—perfect, Langdon,” said I. “And I think I’m a judge.”

“Glad you like it,” said he, trying to dissemble his satisfaction in having so strongly impressed me.

“You must take me through your house some time,” I went on. “I’m going to build soon. No—don’t be afraid I’ll imitate. I’m too vain for that. But I want suggestions. I’m not ashamed to go to school to a master—to anybody, for that matter.”

“Why do you build?” said he. “A town house is a nuisance. If I could induce my wife to take the children to the country to live, I’d dispose of this.”

“That’s it—the wife,” said I.

“But you have got no wife. At least—”

“No,” I replied, with a laugh. “Not yet. But I’m going to have.”

I interpreted his expression then as amused cynicism. But I see a different meaning in it now. And I can recall his tone, can find a strained note which then escaped me in his usual mocking drawl.

“To marry?” said he. “I haven’t heard of that.”

“Nor no one else,” said I.

“Except her,” said he.

“Not even except her,” said I. “But I’ve got my eye on her—and you know what that means with me.”

“Yes, I know,” drawled he. Then he added, with a curious twinkle which I do not now misunderstand: “We have somewhat the same weakness.”

“I shouldn’t call it a weakness,” said I. “It’s the quality that makes the chief difference between us and the common run—the fellows that have no purposes beyond getting comfortably through each day—”

“And getting real happiness,” he interrupted, with just a tinge of bitterness.

“We wouldn’t think it happiness,” said I.

“The worse for us,” he replied. “We’re under the tyranny of to-morrow—and happiness is impossible.”

"May I look at your bedroom?" I asked, with a glance toward the door which seemed to me the likeliest entrance to it.

"Certainly," he assented, pointing lazily at the door just opposite the one I had guessed. I pushed it open. At first glimpse I was disappointed. The big room looked like a section of a hospital ward. It wasn't until I had taken a second and very careful look at the tiled floor, walls, ceiling, that I noted that those plain smooth tiles were of the very finest, were probably of his own designing, certainly had been imported from some great Dutch or German kiln. Not an inch of drapery, not a picture, nothing that could hold dust or germs anywhere; a square of sanitary matting by the bed; another square opposite an elaborate exercising machine. The bed was of the simplest metallic construction—but I noted that the metal was the finest bronze. On it was a thin, hard mattress. You could wash the big room down and out with the hose, without doing any damage.

"Quite a contrast," said I, glancing from the one room to the other.

"My architect is a crank on sanitation," he explained, from his lounge.

I noted that the windows were huge—to admit floods of light—and that they were hermetically sealed so that the air should be only the pure air supplied from the ventilating apparatus. To most people that room would have seemed a cheaply got together cell; to me, once I had examined it, it was evidently built at enormous cost and represented an extravagance of common-sense luxury which would be demeaned by calling it princely or royal.

Suddenly my mind reverted to my business. "How do you account for the steadiness of Textile, Langdon?" I asked, returning to the carved sitting room and trying to put these surroundings out of my mind.

"I don't account for it," was his languid, uninterested reply.

"Any of your people under the market?"

"It isn't to my interest to have it supported, is it?" he replied.

"I know that," I admitted. "But why doesn't it drop?"

"Those letters of yours may have overeducated the public in confidence," suggested he. "Your followers have the habit of believing implicitly whatever you say."

"Yes, but I haven't written a line about Textile for nearly a month now," I pretended to object, my vanity fairly purring with pleasure.

"That's the only reason I can give," said he.

"You are sure none of your people is supporting the stock?" I asked, as a form and not for information—for I thought I knew they weren't—I trusted him to have seen to that.

"I'd like to get my holdings back," said he. "I can't buy until it's down. And I know none of my people would dare support it."

You will notice he did not say directly that he was not himself supporting the market; he simply so answered me that I, not suspecting him, would think he had reassured me. There is another of those mysteries of conscience. Had it been necessary, Langdon would have told me the lie flat and direct, would have told it without a tremor of the voice or a blink of the eye, would have lied to me as I have heard him, and almost all the big fellows, lie under oath before courts and legislative committees; yet, so long as it was possible, he would thus lie to me with lies that were not lies. As if negative lies are not falsier and more cowardly than positive lies, because securer and more deceptive.

"Well, then, the price will break," said I. "It won't be many days before the public begins to realize that there's nobody under Textile."

"No sharp break!" he said, carelessly. "No panic!"

"I'll see to that," replied I, with not a shadow of a notion of the subtlety behind his warning.

"I hope it will break soon," he then said, adding in his friendliest voice with what I now know was malignant treachery: "You owe it to me to bring it down." That meant that he wished me

to increase my already far too heavy and dangerous line of shorts.

Just then a voice—a woman's voice—came from the salon. "May I come in? Do I interrupt?" it said, and its tone struck me as having in it something of plaintive appeal.

"Excuse me a moment, Blacklock," said he, rising with what was for him haste.

But he was too late. The woman entered, searching the room with a piercing, suspicious gaze. At once I saw, behind that look, a jealousy that pounced on every object which came into its view, and studied it with a hope that feared and a fear that hoped. When her eyes had toured the room, they paused upon him, seemed to be saying: "You've baffled me again, but I'm not discouraged. I shall find you out yet."

"Well, my dear?" said Langdon, whom she seemed faintly to amuse. "It's only Mr. Blacklock. Mr. Blacklock, my wife."

I rose and bowed; she looked coldly at me, and her slight nod was more than a hint that she wished to be left alone with her husband.

I said to him: "Well, I'll be off. Thank you for—"

"One moment," he interrupted. Then to his wife: "Anything special?"

She flushed. "No—nothing especial. I just came to see you. But if I am disturbing you—as usual—"

"Not at all," said he. "When Blacklock and I have finished, I'll come to you. It won't be longer than an hour—or so."

"Is that all?" she said, almost savagely. Evidently she was one of those women who dare not make "scenes" with their husbands in private and so are compelled to take advantage of the presence of strangers to ease their minds. She was an extremely pretty woman, would have been beautiful but for the worn, strained, nervous look which probably came from her jealousy. She was small in stature; her figure was approaching that stage at which a woman is called "well rounded"

only by the charitable, is called fat by the frank and accurate. A few years more and she would be hunting down and destroying early photographs. There was in the arrangement of her hair and in the details of her toilet—as well as in her giving way to her tendency to fat—that carelessness which so many women allow themselves, once they are safely married to a man they care for.

"Curious," thought I, "that being married to him should make her feel secure enough of him to let herself go, although her instinct is warning her all the time that she isn't in the least sure of him. Her laziness must be stronger than her love—her laziness or her vanity."

While I was thus sizing her up, she was reluctantly leaving. She didn't even give me the courtesy of a bow—whether from self-absorption or from haughtiness I don't know; probably from both. She was a Western woman, and they say that when those Western women do become perverts to New York's gospel of snobbishness, they are the worst snobs in the push. Langdon, regardless of my presence, looked after her with a faintly amused, faintly contemptuous expression that—well, it didn't fit in with my notion of what constitutes a gentleman. In fact, I didn't know which of them had come off the worse in that brief encounter in my presence. It was my first glimpse of a fashionable behind-the-scenes, and it made a profound impression upon me—an impression that has grown deeper as I have learned how much of the typical there was in it.

When we were seated again, Langdon, after a few reflective puffs at his cigarette, said: "So you're about to marry?"

"I hope so," said I. "But as I haven't asked her yet, I can't be quite sure." Without realizing it, I wasn't quite so sure I wished to marry as I had been a few minutes before.

"I trust you're making a sensible marriage," said he. "If the part that may be glamour should by chance rub clean away, there ought to be something to

make one feel he wasn't wholly an ass."

"Very sensible," I replied, with emphasis. "I want the woman. I need her."

He inspected the coal of his cigarette, lifting his eyebrows at it. Presently he said: "And she?"

"I don't know how she feels about it—as I told you," I replied, curtly. In spite of myself, my eyes shifted and my skin began to burn. "What's the name of your architect?"

"Wilder & Marcy," said he. "They're fairly satisfactory, if you tell 'em exactly what you want and watch 'em all the time. They're perfectly conventional and so can't distinguish between originality that's artistic and originality that's only bizarre. They're like most people—they keep to the beaten track and fight tooth and nail against being drawn out of it and against those who do go out of it."

"I'll have a talk with Marcy this very day," said I.

"Oh, you're in a hurry!" He laughed. "And you haven't asked her. You remind me of that Greek philosopher who was in love with Lais. They asked him: 'But does she love you?' And he said: 'One does not inquire of the fish one likes whether it likes one.'"

I flushed. "You'll pardon me, Langdon," said I, "but I don't like that. It isn't my attitude toward—the right sort of women."

He looked half quizzical, half apologetic. "Ah, to be sure," said he. "I forgot you weren't a married man."

"I don't think I'll ever lose the belief that there's a quality in a good woman for a man to—to respect and look up to."

"I envy you," said he, but his eyes were mocking still. I saw he was a little disdainful of my rebuking *him*—and angry at me, too.

"Woman's a subject for men to avoid," said I, easily—for, having set myself right, I felt I could afford to smooth him down.

"Well, good-by—good luck—or, if I may be permitted to say it to one so

touchy, the kind of luck you're bent on having, whether it's good or bad."

"If my luck ain't good, I'll make it good," said I, with a laugh. And so I left him.

That same day I began to plunge on Textile, watching the market closely, that I might go more slowly should there be signs of a dangerous break—for no more than Langdon did I want a sudden panicky slump. The price held steady, however; but I, fool that I was, certain the fall must come, plunged on, digging the pit for my own destruction deeper and deeper.

## VI.

I was neither seeing nor hearing from the Ellerslys; but, as I knew why, I was not disquieted. I had made them temporarily easy in their finances just before that dinner, and they, being a pair of fatuous, incurable optimists, were cheerfully letting things drift.

When my education seemed far enough advanced, I sent for Sam. He, after his footless fashion, didn't bother to acknowledge my note. His margin account with me was at the moment straight; I turned to his father. I had my cashier send him a formal, type-written letter, informing him that his account was overdrawn and that we "would be obliged if he would give the matter his immediate attention." The note must have reached him the following morning; but he did not come until, after waiting three days, I sent him a sharp demand for a check for the balance due us.

A pleasing, aristocratic-looking figure he made as he entered my office, with his air of the man whose hands have never known the stains of toil, with his manner of having always received deferential treatment. There was no pretense in my curt greeting, my tone of "dispatch your business, sir, and begone"; for I was both busy and much irritated against him. "I guess you want to see our cashier," said I, after giving him a hasty, absent-minded handshake. "My boy out there will take you to him."



The old do-nothing's face lost its confident, condescending expression. His lip quivered, and I think there were tears in his bad, dim, gray-green eyes. I suppose he thought his a profoundly pathetic case; no doubt he hadn't the remotest conception what he really was—and no doubt, also, there are many who would honestly take his view. As if the fact that he was born with all possible advantages did not make him and his plight inexcusable. It passes my comprehension why people of his sort, when suffering from the calamities they have deliberately brought upon themselves by laziness and self-indulgence and extravagance, should get a sympathy that is withheld from honest, ordinary people in far more real misfortunes not of their making.

"No, my dear Blacklock," said he. "It is you I want to talk with. And, first, I owe you my apologies. I know you'll make allowances for one who was never trained to business methods. I've always been like a child in those matters."

"You frighten me," said I. "The last 'gentleman' who came throwing me off my guard with that plea was shrewd enough to get away with a very large sum of my hard-earned money. Besides"—and I was laughing, though not too good-naturedly—"I've noticed that you 'gentlemen' become vague about business only when the balance is against you. When it's in your favor, you manage to get your minds on business long enough, and closely enough, to collect to the last fraction of a cent."

He heartily echoed my laugh. "I only wish I *were* clever," said he. "However, I've come to ask your indulgence. I'd have been here before, but those who owe me have been putting me off. And they're of the sort of people whom it's impossible to press."

"I'd like to accommodate you further," said I, shedding that last little hint as a cliff sheds rain, "but your account has been in an unsatisfactory state for nearly a month now."

"I'm sure you'll give me a few days longer," was his easy reply, as if we were discussing a trifle. "By the way,

you haven't been to see us yet. Only this morning my wife was wondering when you'd come. You quite captivated her, Blacklock. Can't you dine with us to-morrow night—no, Sunday—at eight? We're having in a few people I think you'd like to meet."

If anyone imagines that this bald, business-like way of putting it set my teeth on edge, let him dismiss the idea; my bare hands had been too long accustomed to the feel of the harsh facts of life. It is evidence of the shrewdness of the old fellow at character-reading that he wasted none of his silk and velvet pretenses upon me, and so saved his time and mine. Probably he wished me to see that I need have no timidity or false shame in dealing with him, that when the time came to talk business I was free to talk it in my own straight fashion.

"Glad to come," said I, wishing to be rid of him, now that my point was gained. "We'll let the account stand open for the present—I rather think your stocks are going up. Give my regards to—the ladies, especially to Miss Anita."

He winced, but thanked me graciously; gave me his soft, fine hand to shake and departed, as eager to be off as I to be rid of him. "Sunday next—at eight," were his last words. "Don't fail us"—that in the tone of a king addressing some obscure person whom he had commanded to court. It may be that old Ellersly was wholly unconscious of his superciliousness, fancied he was treating me as if I were almost an equal; but I suspect he rather accentuated his natural manner, with the idea of impressing upon me that in our deal he was giving at least as much as I.

I recall that I thought about him for several minutes after he was gone—philosophized on the folly of a man's deliberately weaving a net to entangle himself. As if any man was ever caught in any net not of his own weaving and setting; as if I myself was not just then working at the last row of meshes of a net in which I was to ensnare myself.

My petty and inevitable success with

that helpless creature added amazingly, ludicrously, to that dangerous elation which, as I can now see, had been growing in me ever since the day Roebuck yielded so readily to my demands as to National Coal. The whole trouble with me was that up to that time I had won all my victories by the plainest kind of straightaway hard work. I was imagining myself victor in contests of wit against wit, when, in fact, no one with any especial equipment of brains had ever opposed me; all the really strong men had been helping me because they found me useful. Too easy success—there is the clew to the wild folly of my performances in those days, a folly that seems utterly inconsistent with the reputation for shrewdness I had, and seemed to have earned.

I can find a certain small amount of legitimate excuse for my falling under Langdon's spell. He had, and has, fascinations, through personal magnetism, which it is hardly in human nature to resist. But for my self-hypnotism in the case of Roebuck, I find no excuse whatever for myself.

He sent for me and told me what share in National Coal they had decided to give me for my Manasquale mines. "Langdon and Melville," said he, "think me too liberal; far too liberal, my boy. But I insisted—in your case I felt we could afford to be generous as well as just." All this with an air that was a combination of the pastoral and the parental.

I can't even offer the excuse of not having seen that he was a hypocrite. I felt his hypocrisy at once, and my first impulse was to jump for my breast-works. But instantly my vanity got behind me, held me in the open, pushed me on toward him. If you will notice, almost all "confidence" games rely for success chiefly upon enlisting a man's vanity to play the traitor to his judgment. So, instead of reading his liberality as plain proof of intended treachery, I read it as plain proof of my own greatness, and of the fear it had inspired in old Roebuck. Laugh *with* me if you like; but, before you laugh at me, think carefully—those of you who have ever

put yourselves to the test on the field of action—think carefully whether you have never found that your head decoration which you thought a crown was in reality the peaked and belled cap of the fool.

But my vanity was not done with me. Led on by it, I proceeded to have one of those ridiculous "generous impulses"—I persuaded myself that there must be some decency in this liberality, in addition to the prudence which I flattered myself was the chief cause. "I have been unjust to Roebuck," I thought. "I have been misjudging his character." And incredible though it seems, I said to him with a good deal of genuine emotion: "I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Roebuck. And, instead of trying, I want to apologize to you. I have thought many hard things against you; have spoken some of them. I had better have been attending to my own conscience, instead of criticising yours."

I had always thought his face about the most repulsive, hypocrisy-glazed concourse of evil passions that ever fronted a fiend in the flesh. It had seemed to me the fitting result of a long career which, according to common report, was stained with murder, with rapacity and heartless cruelty, with the most brutal secret sensuality, and which had left in its wake the ruins of lives and hearts and fortunes innumerable. I had looked on the vast wealth he had heaped mountain high as a monument to devil-daring—other men had, no doubt, dreamed of doing the ferocious things he had done, but their weak, human hearts failed when it came to executing these horrible acts, and they had to be content with smaller fortunes, with the comparatively small fruits of their comparatively small infamies. He had dared all, had won; the most powerful bowed with quaking knees before him, and trembled lest they might, by a blundering look or word, excite his anger and cause him to snatch their possessions from them.

Thus I had regarded him, accepting the universal judgment, believing the thousand and one stories. But as his eyes, softened by his hugely generous

act, beamed upon me now, I was amazed that I had so misjudged him. In that face which I had thought frightful there was, to my hypnotized gaze, the look of strong, sincere—yes, holy—beauty and power—the look of an archangel.

"Thank you, Blacklock," said he, in a voice which made me feel as if I were a little boy in the crossroads church, believing I could almost see the angels floating above the heads of the singers in the choir behind the preacher. "Thank you. I am not surprised that you have misjudged me. God has given me a great work to do, and those who do His will in this wicked world must expect martyrdom. I should never have had the courage to do what I have done, what He has done through me, had He not guided my every step. You are not a religious man?"

"I try to do what's square," said I. "But I'd prefer not to talk about it."

"That's right! That's right!" he approved, earnestly. "A man's religion is a matter between himself and his God. But I hope, Matthew, you will never forget that, unless you have daily, hourly communion with Almighty God, you will never be able to bear the great burdens, to do the great work fearlessly, disregarding the lies of the wicked, and, hardest of all, to endure the honestly mistaken judgments of honest men."

"I'll look into it," said I. And I don't know to what lengths of foolish speech I should have gone had I not been saved by an office boy interrupting with a card for him.

"Ah, here's Walters now," said he. Then to the boy: "Bring him in when I ring."

I rose to go.

"No, sit down, Blacklock," he insisted. "You are in with us now, and you may learn something by seeing how I deal with the larger problems that face men in these large undertakings, the problems that have faced me in each new enterprise I have inaugurated to the glory of God."

Naturally, I accepted with enthusiasm.

You would not believe what a mood I had by this time been worked into by

my rampant and raging vanity and emotionalism and by his snakelike charming. "Thank you," I said, with an energetic warmth which must have secretly amused him mightily.

"When my reorganization of the iron industry proved such a great success, and God rewarded my labors with large returns," he went on, "I looked about me to see what new work He wished me to undertake, how He wished me to invest His profits. And I saw the coal industry and the coal-carrying railroads in confusion, with waste on every side, and godless competition. Thousands of widows and orphans who had invested in coal railway and coal stocks were getting no returns. Labor was fitfully employed owing to alternations of over-production and no production at all. I saw my work ready for my hand. And now we are bringing order out of chaos. This man Walters, useful up to a certain point, has become insolent, corrupt, a stumbling block in our way." Here he pressed the button of his electric bell.

Walters entered. He was one of the great railway presidents, was universally regarded as a power, though I, of course, knew that he, like so many other presidents of railways, of individual corporations, of banks, of insurance companies, and high political officials in cities, States and the nation, was little more than a figurehead put up and used by the inside financial ring. As he shifted from leg to leg, holding his hat and trying to steady his twitching upper lip, he looked like nothing so much as a schoolboy about to get a whipping from the male principal.

Roebuck shook hands cordially with him, responded to his nervous glance at me with: "Blacklock is practically in our directory." We all sat, then Roebuck began in his kindest tone:

"We have decided, Walters, that we must give your place to a stronger man. Your gross receipts, outside of coal, have fallen rapidly and steadily for the past three quarters. You were put into the presidency to bring them up. They have shown no change beyond what might have been expected in the natural

fluctuations of freight. We had expected to resume dividends a year ago. We have barely been able to meet the interest on our bonds."

"But, Mr. Roebuck," pleaded Walters, "you doubled the bonded indebtedness of the road just before I took charge."

"The money went into improvements, into increasing your facilities, did it not?" inquired Roebuck, his paw as soft as a playful tiger's.

"Part of it," said Walters. "But you remember the reorganizing syndicate got five millions, and then the contracts for the new work had to be given to construction companies in which directors of the road were silent partners. Then they are interested in the supply companies from which I must buy. You know what all that means, Mr. Roebuck."

"No doubt," said Roebuck, still smooth and soft. "But if there was waste, you should have reported——"

"To whom?" demanded Walters. "Everyone of our directors, including yourself, Mr. Roebuck, is a stockholder—a large stockholder—in one or more of those companies."

"Have you proof of this, Walters?" asked Roebuck, looking profoundly shocked. "It's a very grave charge—a criminal charge."

"Proof?" said Walters. "You know how that is. The real books of all big companies are kept in the memories of the directors—and mighty treacherous memories they are." This with a nervous laugh. "As for the holdings of directors in construction and supply companies—most of those holdings are in other names—all of them are disguised where the connection is direct."

Roebuck shook his head sadly. "You admit, then, that you have allowed millions of the road's money to be wasted, that you made no complaint, no effort to stop the waste; and your only defense is that you *suspect* the directors of fraud. And you accuse them to excuse yourself—accuse them with no proof. Were you in any of those companies, Walters?"

"No," he said, his eyes shifting.

Roebuck's face grew stern. "You

bought two hundred thousand dollars of the last issue of government bonds, they tell me, with your two years' profits from the Western Railway Construction Company."

"I bought no bonds," blustered Walters. "What money I have I made out of speculating in the stock of my road—on legitimate inside information."

"Your uncle in Wilkesbarre, I meant," pursued Roebuck.

Walters reddened, looked straight at Roebuck without speaking.

"Do you still deny?" demanded Roebuck.

"I saw everybody—*everybody*—grafting," said Walters, boldly, "and I thought I might as well take my share. It's part of the business." Then he added, cynically: "That's the way it is nowadays. The lower ones see the higher ones raking off, and they rake off, too—down to conductors and brakemen. We caught some track-walkers in a conspiracy to dispose of the discarded ties and rails the other day." He laughed. "We jailed *them*."

"If you can show that any director has taken anything that did not belong to him, if you can show that a single contract you let to a construction or a supply company—except, of course, the contracts you let to yourself—of them I know nothing, suspect much—if you can show one instance of these criminal doings, Mr. Walters, I shall back you up with all my power in prosecution."

"Of course I can't show it," cried Walters. "If I tried, wouldn't they ruin and disgrace me, perhaps send me to the penitentiary? Wasn't I the one that passed on and signed their contracts? And wouldn't they—wouldn't you, Mr. Roebuck—have fired me if I refused to sign?"

"Excuses, excuses, Walters," was Roebuck's answer, with a sad, disappointed look, as if he had hoped Walters would make a brighter showing for himself. "How many times have you yourself talked to me of this eternal excuse habit of men who fail? And if I expended my limited brain power in looking into all the excuses and ex-

planations, what energy or time would I have for constructive work? All I can do is to select a man for a position and to judge him by results. You were put in charge to produce dividends. You haven't produced them. I'm sorry, and I venture to hope that things are not so bad as you make out in your eagerness to excuse yourself. For the sake of old times, Tom, I ignore your angry insinuations against me. I try to be just, and to be just one must be impersonal."

"Well," said Walters, with an air of desperation, "give me another year, Mr. Roebuck, and I'll produce results all right. I'll break the agreements and cut rates. I'll freeze out the branch roads and our minority stockholders. I'll keep the books so that all the expert accountants in New York couldn't untangle them. I'll wink at and commit and order committed all the necessary crimes. I don't know why I've been so squeamish, when there were so many penitentiary offenses that I did consent to, and, for that matter, commit, without a quiver. I thought I ought to draw the line somewhere—and I drew it at keeping my personal word and at keeping the books reasonably straight. But I'll go the limit."

I'll never forget Roebuck's expression; it was perfect, simply perfect—a great and good man outraged beyond endurance, but a Christian still. "You have made it impossible for me to temper justice with mercy, Walters," said he. "If it were not for the long years of association, for the affection for you which has grown up in me, I should hand you over to the fate you have earned. You tell me you have been committing crimes in my service. You tell me you will commit more and greater crimes. I can scarcely believe my own ears."

Walters laughed scornfully—the reckless laugh of a man who suddenly sees that he is cornered and must fight for his life. "Rot!" he jeered. "Rot! You always have been a wonder at juggling with your conscience. But do you expect me to believe you think yourself innocent because you do not

yourself execute the orders you issue—orders which can be carried out only by committing crimes?" Walters was now beside himself with rage. He gave the reins to that high horse he had been riding ever since he was promoted to the presidency of the great coal road. He began to lay on whip and spur. "Do you think," he cried to Roebuck, "the blood of those five hundred men drowned in the Pequot mine is not on *your* hands—*your* head? You, who ordered John Wilkinson to suppress the competition the Pequot was giving you, ordered him in such a way that he knew the alternative was his own ruin? He shot himself—yet he had as good an excuse as you, for he, too, passed on the order until it got to the poor fireman—that wretched fellow they sent to the penitentiary for life? And as sure as there is a God in heaven, you will some day do a long, long sentence in whatever hell there is, for letting that wretch rot in prison—yes, and for John Wilkinson's suicide, and for the lives of those five hundred drowned. Your pensions to the widows and orphans can't save you."

I listened to this tirade astounded. Used as I was to men losing their heads through vanity, I could not credit my own ears and eyes when they reported to me this insane exhibition. I looked at Roebuck. He was wearing an expression of beatific patience; he would have made a fine study for a picture of the martyr at the stake.

"I forgive you, Tom," he said, when Walters stopped for breath. "Your own sinful heart makes you see the black of sin upon everything. I had heard that you were going about making loud boasts of your power over your employers, but I tried not to believe it. I see now that you have, indeed, lost your senses. Your prosperity has been too much for your good sense." He sighed, mournfully. "I shall not interfere to prevent your getting a position elsewhere," he continued. "But after what you have confessed, after your slanders, how can I put you back in your old place out West, as I intended? How can I con-

tinue the interest in you and care for your career that I have had, in spite of all your shortcomings? I who raised you up from a clerk."

"Raised me up as you fellows always raise men up—because you find them clever at doing your dirty work. I was a decent, honest fellow when you first took notice of me and tempted me. But, by God, Mr. Roebuck, if I've sold out beyond hope of living decent again, I'll have my price—to the last cent. You've got to leave me where I am or give me a place and salary equally as good." This Walters said blusteringly, but beneath I could detect the beginnings of a whine.

"You are angry, Tom," said Roebuck, soothingly. "I have hurt your vanity—it is one of the heaviest crosses I have to bear, that I must be continually hurting the vanity of men. Go away and—calm down. Think the situation over coolly; then come and apologize to me, and I will do what I can to help you. As for your threats—when you are calm, you will see how idle they are."

Walters gave a sort of groan; and though I, blinded by my prejudices in favor of Roebuck and of the crowd with whom my interests lay, had been feeling that he was an impudent and crazy ingrate, I pitied him.

"What proofs have I got?" he said, desperately. "If I show up the things I know about, I show up myself, and everybody will say I'm lying about you and the others in the effort to save myself. The newspapers would denounce me as a treacherous liar—you fellows own or control or fizzle them in one way and another. And if I was believed, who'd prosecute you and what court'd condemn you? Don't you own both political parties and make all the tickets, and can't you ruin any office-holders who lifted a finger against you? What a hell of a state of affairs!"

A swifter or a weaker descent I have never witnessed. My pity changed to contempt. "This fellow, with his great reputation," thought I, "is a fool and a knave, and a weak one at that."

"Go away now, Tom," said Roebuck.

"When you're master of yourself again, come to see me."

"Master of myself!" cried Walters, bitterly. "Who that's got anything to lose is master of himself in this country?" With shoulders sagging and a sort of stumble in his gait, he went toward the door. He paused there to say: "I've served too long, Mr. Roebuck. There's no fight in me. I thought there was, but there ain't. Do the best you can for me." And he took himself out of our sight.

You will wonder how I was ever able to blind myself to the reality of this frightful scene. But please remember that in this world every thought and every act is a mixture of the good and the bad; and the one or the other shows the more prominently according to one's point of view. There probably isn't a criminal in any cell, anywhere, no matter what he may say in sniveling pretense in the hope of lighter sentence, who doesn't in the bottom of his heart believe his crime or crimes somehow justifiable—and who couldn't make out a plausible case for himself.

At that time I was stuffed with the arrogance of my fancied membership in the caste of directing financial geniuses; I was looking at everything from the viewpoint of the brotherhood of which Roebuck was the strongest brother, and of which I imagined myself a full and equal member. I did not, I could not, blind myself to the vivid reminders of his relentlessness; but I knew too well how necessary the iron hand and the fixed purpose are to great affairs to judge him as infuriated Walters, with his vanity savagely wounded, was judging him. I'd as soon have thought of describing General Grant as a murderer, because he ordered the battles in which men were killed or because he planned and led the campaigns in which subordinates committed rapine and pillage and assassination. I did not then see the radical difference—did not realize that while Grant's work was at the command of patriotism and necessity, there was no necessity whatever for Roebuck's getting rich but the command of his own greedy and cruel appetites.



Don't misunderstand me. My morals are practical, not theoretical. Men must die, old customs embodied in law must be broken, the venal must be bribed and the weak cowed and compelled, in order that civilization may advance. You can't establish a railway or a great industrial system by rosewater morality. But I shall show, before I finish, that Roebuck and his gang of so-called "organizers of industry" bear about the same relation to industry that the boll weevil bears to the cotton crop.

I'll withdraw this, if anyone can show me that, as the result of the activities of those parasites, anybody anywhere is using or is able to use a single pound or bushel or yard more of any commodity whatsoever. I'll withdraw it, if I cannot show that but for those parasites, bearing precisely the same relation to our society that the king and nobles and priests bore to France before the Revolution, everybody except them would have more goods and more money than he has under the system which enables them to overshadow the highways of commerce with their strongholds and to clog them with their toll gates. They know little about producing, about manufacturing, about distributing, about any process of industry. Their skill is in temptation, in trickery and in terror.

On that day, however, I sided—honestly, as I thought—with Roebuck. What I saw and heard increased my admiration of the man, my already profound respect for his master mind. And when, just after Walters went out, he leaned back in his chair and sat silent with closed eyes and moving lips, I—yes, I, Matt Blacklock, "Black Matt," as they call me—was awed in presence of this great and good man at prayer!

How he and that god of his must have laughed at me! So infatuated was I that, clear as it is that he'd never have let me be present at such a scene without a strong ulterior motive, not until he himself long afterward made it impossible for me to deceive myself did I penetrate to his real purpose—that he wished to fill me with a prudent dread and fear of him, with a sense of

the absoluteness of his power and of the hopelessness of trying to combat it. But at the time I thought—imbecile that my vanity had made me—at the time I thought he had let me be present because he genuinely liked, admired and trusted me!

Is it not amazing that one who could fall into such colossal blunders should survive to tell of them? I would not have survived had not Roebuck and his crowd been at the same time making an even more colossal misestimate of me than I was making of them. My attack of vanity was violent, but temporary; theirs was equally violent, and chronic and incurable to boot.

## VII.

On my first day in long trousers I may have been more ill at ease than I was that Sunday evening at Ellerslys; but I doubt it.

When I first came into their big drawing room and looked round at the assembled guests, I never felt more at home in my life. "Yes," said I to myself, as Mrs. Ellersly was greeting me and as I noted the friendly interest in the glances of the women, "this is where I belong. I'm beginning to come into my own."

As I look back on it now, I can't refrain from smiling at my own simplicity—and snobbishness. For, so determined was I to believe what I was working for was worth while, that I actually fancied there were upon these in reality ordinary people, ordinary in looks, ordinary in intelligence, some subtle marks of superiority, that made them at a glance superior to the common run. This ecstasy of snobbishness deluded me as to the women only—for, as I looked at the men, I at once felt myself their superior. They were an inconsequential, patterned lot. I even was better dressed than any of them, except possibly Mowbray Langdon; and, if he showed to more advantage than I, it was because of his manner, which, as I have probably said before, is superior to that of any human being I've ever seen—man or woman.

"You are to take Anita in," said Mrs. Ellersly. With a laughable sense that I was doing myself proud, I crossed the room easily and took my stand in front of her. She shook hands with me politely enough. Langdon was sitting beside her; I had interrupted their conversation.

"Hello, Blacklock!" said Langdon, with a quizzical, satirical smile with the eyes only. "It seems strange to see you at such peaceful pursuits." His glance traveled over me critically—and that was the beginning of my trouble. Presently he rose, left me alone with her.

"You know Mr. Langdon?" she said, obviously because she felt she must say something.

"Oh, yes," I replied. "We are old friends. What a tremendous swell he is—really a swell." This with enthusiasm.

She made no comment. I debated with myself whether to go on talking of Langdon. I decided against it because all I knew of him had to do with matters downtown—and Monson had impressed it upon me that downtown was taboo in the drawing room. I rummaged my brain in vain for another and suitable topic.

She sat, and I stood—she tranquil and beautiful and cold, I every instant more miserably self-conscious. When the start for the dining room was made I offered her my left arm, though I had carefully planned beforehand just what I would do. She—without hesitation and, as I know now, out of sympathy for me in my suffering—was taking my wrong arm, when it flashed on me like a blinding blow in the face that I ought to be on the other side of her. I got red, tripped in the far-sprawling train of Mrs. Langdon, tore it slightly, tried to get to the other side of Miss Ellersly by walking in front of her, recovered myself, somehow stumbled round behind her, walked on her train and finally arrived at her left side, conscious in every burning atom of me that I was making a spectacle of myself and that the whole company was enjoying it. I must have seemed to them an ignorant

boor; in fact, I had been about a great deal among people who knew how to behave, and had I never given the matter of how to conduct myself on that particular occasion an instant's thought, I should have got on without the least trouble.

It was with a sigh of profound relief that I sank upon the chair between Miss Ellersly and Mrs. Langdon, safe from danger of making "breaks," so I hoped, for the rest of the evening. But within a very few minutes I realized that my little misadventure had unnerved me. My hands were trembling so that I could scarcely lift the soup spoon to my lips, and my throat had got so far beyond control that I had difficulty in swallowing. Miss Ellersly and Mrs. Langdon were each busy with the man on the other side of her; I was left to my own reflections, and I was not sure whether this made me more or less uncomfortable. To add to my torment, I grew angry, furiously angry, with myself. I looked up and down and across the big table, noted all these self-satisfied people perfectly at their ease; and I said to myself: "What's the matter with you, Matt? They're only men and women, and by no means the best specimens of the breed. You've got more brains than all of 'em put together, probably; is there one of the lot that could get a job at good wages if thrown on the world? What do you care what they think of you? It's a damn sight more important what you think of them, as it won't be many years before you'll hold everything they value, everything that makes them of consequence, in the hollow of your hand."

But it was of no use. When Miss Ellersly finally turned her face toward me to indicate that she would be graciously pleased to listen if I had anything to communicate, I felt as if I were slowly wilting, felt my throat contracting into a dry twist. What was the matter with me? Partly, of course, my own snobbishness, which led me to attach the same importance to those people that the snobbishness of the small and silly had got them in the way of attaching to themselves. But the chief

cause of my inability was Monson and his lessons. I had thought I was estimating at its proper value what he was teaching. But so earnest and serious am I by nature, and so earnest and serious was he about those trivialities which he had been brought up to regard as the whole of life, that I had unconsciously absorbed his attitude; I was like a fellow who, after cramming hard for an examination, finds that all the questions put to him are on things he hasn't looked at. I had been making an ass of myself, and that evening I got the first installment of my sound and just punishment. I who had prided myself on being ready for anything or anybody, I who had laughed contemptuously when I read how men and women, presented at European courts, made fools of themselves—I was made ridiculous by these people who, as I well know, had nothing to back their pretensions to superiority but a barefaced bluff.

Perhaps, had I thought this out at the table, I should have got back to myself and my normal ease; but I didn't, and that long and terrible dinner was one long and terrible agony of stage fright. When the ladies withdrew, the other men drew together, talking of people I did not know and of things I did not care about—I thought then that they were avoiding me deliberately as a flock of tame ducks avoids a wild one that some wind had accidentally blown down among them. I knew now that my aspect was probably responsible for my isolation. However, I sat alone, sullenly resisting old Ellersly's constrained efforts to get me into the conversation, and angrily suspicious that Langdon was enjoying my discomfiture more than the cigarette he was apparently absorbed in.

Old Ellersly, growing more and more nervous before my dark and sullen look, finally seated himself beside me. "I

hope you'll stay after the others have gone," said he. "They'll all leave early, and we can have a quiet smoke and talk."

All unstrung though I was, I yet had the desperate courage to resolve that I'd not leave, defeated in the eyes of the one person there whose opinion I really cared about. "Very well," said I, in reply to him.

He and I did not follow the others back to the drawing room, but turned into the library adjoining. From where I seated myself I could see part of the drawing room—saw the others leaving, saw Langdon lingering, ignoring the impatient glances of his wife, while he talked on and on with Miss Ellersly. Her face was full toward me; she was not aware that I was looking at her, I am sure, for she did not once lift her eyes. As I sat studying her, everything else was crowded out of my mind. She was indeed wonderful—too wonderful and fine and fragile, it seemed to me at that moment, for one so plain and rough as I. "Incredible," thought I, "that she is the child of such a pair as Ellersly and his wife—but again, has she any less in common with them than she'd have with any other pair of human creatures?" Her slender white arms, her slender white shoulders, the bloom on her skin, the graceful, careless way her hair grew round her forehead and at the nape of her neck, the rather haughty expression of her small face softened into sweetness and even tenderness, now that she was talking at her ease with one whom she regarded as of her own kind—"but he isn't!" I protested to myself. "Langdon—none of these men—none of these women, is fit to associate with her. They can't appreciate her. She belongs to me who can." And I had a mad impulse then and there to seize her and bear her away—home—to the home she could make for me out of what I would shower upon her.

# Is Social Prestige Worth While?

We have now published a series of nine articles giving in detail the phases of social life in American cities and a comparative review of English and American conditions. With this issue we begin a series prepared by a person thoroughly competent to deal with the subject, which will present in the same detailed way the facts as to the cost involved in maintaining social position—the cost in money and energy, mental, moral and physical. Our readers can, at the conclusion, form their own estimates and determine for themselves whether it all pays.—The Editors

## I.—THE PRODIGALITY OF THE WEEK-END PARTY



DELIGHTFUL Southern woman of the old régime, coming to New York from a town, narrow but cultured, and full of patrician traditions, received in her morning mail an invitation to a smart house at Lenox from Friday to Monday.

She read it aloud to a fashionable Northern woman who was in her room.

"That is the rudest invitation I ever got," she said. "I haven't the slightest notion of accepting it. When that woman was in Aiken she came over and visited me for a week, and I felt that I knew her quite well."

"What is there rude in the invitation?" asked the New Yorker, as she read the note that was contemptuously tossed to her. "I think it sounds like a charming invitation, and her house is famous for its week-ends."

"Week-ends?" echoed the Southerner. "What are they? I am indignant over having the time of my departure suggested. I think it is intolerably rude of a hostess to do such a thing. In the South, you suggest a day for the guest's arrival, and she usually brings a trunk or two and stays a month or two. She may be a nuisance, but no one would think of suggesting the day of her departure.

She might truly say she had overstayed our good manners if we hinted at her time for leaving. In this note, my friend deliberately puts down in black and white the day I am to leave. It's a wonder she didn't suggest the train. And look at the stationery she uses. The name of her house in red letters, followed by the town, the county, the State, with her telephone number in one corner and her telegraph station in another."

With difficulty the Northern woman tried to persuade her friend of another time and country what a week-end party meant. How it superseded all other forms of house entertainment; that to be sought after for these affairs was the highest tribute paid to social success, and no hostess of to-day felt she was violating the highest courtesy in defining the day of departure for her guests. She explained that the modern woman has many friends on her list, and she wants to offer this courtesy to hundreds of them during one season.

The Southerner was convinced that this method of entertaining was fashionable, but she never will believe it is hospitable.

It is a bit difficult for the men and women of a day that is done—a day of brilliant entertaining, unbounded hospitality, and the sacrifice of oneself on the

altar of courtesy—to understand the modern selfish manner. Yet this week-end party has solved the problem of entertaining in American society.

As soon as members of the old *régime* take part they are delighted with it. It is a part of the progress of American social life. A hostess has too many friends and varied engagements to allow herself to be overrun and dominated by them. She must concentrate her courtesies and define the limitations of her guests.

Society women are learning how to keep themselves from being bored; how to have some freedom from people; how to give some time to their interests and their desires. Like the American business man, they are learning to do everything with a watch in hand and a charming smile on the lips. They are gaining in poise, which means that they take care of themselves and of you in a manner that gets the best results.

The week-end party has developed so rapidly in America that it has become the accepted thing in all fashionable houses, East and West. The South takes to it more slowly, for "defining the day of departure" will be a bitter pill for the Southern guest and hostess to swallow. Fashionable society gladly accepts every detail of the arrangement as a happy way out of a social problem. It has learned to speed the parting guest without whispering a murmur of "stay" in her ears, and in such a manner that the guest has no feeling of being thrown out of the house.

Its development is one of the amazing tributes to the American people as copyists. When we decide on what we like in the old countries, we give it a trial, and in a year's time make it a habit. England and France have held the week-end parties as one of their cherished social traditions for centuries. The leisure life of these countries lies, for the better part of the year, on the magnificent estates owned by lords of the land, and what they do lesser folk do. Châteaux, baronies and ducal palaces were built and arranged with the idea of entertaining numbers of guests, and these guests were so divided that

the season found most of the agreeable people entertained.

Since Leicester took Queen Elizabeth to Kenilworth Castle for over Sunday, week-end parties have been the first method of entertaining in Great Britain.

American life was not ripe for this Old World courtesy until the last three years. Its life was mostly in towns and cities, except for a limited season in the summer. Gradually, as affluence and leisure came to the majority of people, the traditions of the leisure classes in an older civilization were adopted.

Week-end parties were installed in fashionable houses, and thousands of women, with simple homes and slender purses, followed quickly on the heels of the great to save themselves expense.

During the last year country life in America has walked onward in seven-leagued boots. Thousands of country houses have been built in which millions have been spent, and town houses have been sold in order that the rich may live most of the year out of the smoke and din of our machine-built cities. Around these houses have been built estates that lack only the deer and pheasant to put them on a level with those which they have copied.

In cities like Philadelphia, Boston, New York and Baltimore, the aim has been to take houses with histories and reconstruct them along the original lines. This gives even more of a European flavor. Millionaires have sought those places with which their ancestors were concerned, and pride themselves on displaying the kitchen crane and secret stairway which belonged to those from whom they sprang.

This is not snobbishness. It is a healthy sign of good blood. It shows we are getting old enough to realize that big people went before, and that our best chances for greatness are in the cradles of our ancestors.

When Senator Philander C. Knox, late attorney-general, wanted to put a part of his millions into a country house where he could spend the week-end days that the President and Senate did

not absorb, he bought a famous old place at Valley Forge. Here General Washington was quartered. Here Lady Washington came to coax her George into taking better care of himself during that fateful winter. Around the house lie the trenches where the ragged Continentals lay and froze. In his estate runs a fishing stream which deepens into a swimming pool, and ripples its smiling length through bird preserves and wooded foothills.

The brilliant host entertained at his week-end parties this summer the great men of the country. He had the honor of having the President and Mrs. Roosevelt for one of them, and his other guests over Sunday are men whose names are ringing in the corridors of our time. He has set the pace in Philadelphia for distinguished week-end parties, and his rivals are Mr. Wayne MacVeagh, Mr. Charles C. Harrison, provost of the University of Pennsylvania, who had Miss Alice Roosevelt as a week-end guest this season, and Mr. Alexander J. Cassatt, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and master of men and millions.

Mr. Cassatt's week-end parties number guests whose financial power and greatness are only equaled by those to whom Mr. P. A. B. Widener is host. It is said that at several of these over-Sunday parties, the guests who had their feet under the mahogany represented five hundred million dollars.

Mr. Cassatt entertains his week-end guests in a delightfully unique way. He has one palatial place, to which come other masters of men with their wives, and still another house—quaint, historic and small, built in the good old days of William Penn, which nestles at the foot of rolling hills. All around this latter place lies his famous stock farm, and here such horses as Gold Heels grew to racerhood. Here are a chef and a cellar of rare old wines, and it is to this place Mr. Cassatt brings the men. It is a stag-house, in which notable stag parties are given.

Further down in the foothills of Pennsylvania is the quaint house of a famous week-end party giver, Mr.

Clement A. Griscom, ex-president of the National Steamship Company, and intimate friend of famous people from Yokohama to St. Petersburg. No house in America entertains more foreign grandees at week-end parties than "Dolobran." It is not infrequent to sit at this table over Sunday with a diplomat from Japan, a war lord from Europe, a secretary of state, an Egyptian minister, and such financiers as Pierpont Morgan, Mr. Henry Rogers, and an earl or two from England.

It is said that Mr. Griscom's coachman, who takes charge of the arriving and departing guests for the week-end parties, has the most perfect knowledge of diplomatic customs, foreign titles and questions of precedence of any footman outside of European embassies. He knows to a nicety whether to greet an incoming guest on Friday night at the train as "Mr. Minister" or "Mr. Ambassador," "your excellency" or "your grace."

In an embarrassing moment on a rainy night at the Griscom station, he once cleared the social air by making an introduction between a diplomat and a society girl that lightened the burden of everyone concerned.

These men have made week-end parties a most powerful factor in Eastern fashionable life, and have lent to these gatherings a significant element of political strength and financial force whose fame has gone to Great Britain and France.

They take on something of the powerful character of English week-end parties on which they are founded and from which they are copied.

Without question, it is these men, with their dominant social and financial positions, who have given the *cachet* to week-end parties of more than a merely social character. They are able to focus the field glasses of the country on those who are their guests.

The week-end parties of social character merely, no matter how important or rich the guests, must take a lesser place, but they are in the majority.

Mr. Anson Phelps Stokes is the giver of celebrated ones at his home at Lenox.



Here he gathers the belles and beaux of society, whom he entertains in a delightful way. His house is built with forty rooms for week-end guests, arranged in an architectural manner that leaves each guest in privacy.

Mr. Stokes has originated the unique plan in America of giving week-end parties during the winter. His guests come from town in private cars, and the amusements are exhilarating and bracing. He makes his biggest parties for the skating season, and arranges brilliant evenings on the ice, followed by suppers and music. He finishes the week-end with a fancy-dress ball, to which extra guests are sometimes invited, although his house holds sufficient people to make up an agreeable dance without outsiders.

Another host of many millions, who has arranged for late fall and early winter house parties, is Reginald Vanderbilt, who lives at Sandy Point Farm, outside Newport. He has given up a town house, along with hundreds of other millionaires, preferring to take an apartment when he desires it, but keep his Lares and Penates in his country house.

This summer he got eight automobiles to put at the disposal of his week-end guests, who are free to come and go as they please. Each man who has a pet chauffeur can bring him to Sandy Point Farm along with his valet.

Mr. Henry H. Rogers and several other hosts of his wealth have built their houses with rooms in suites for their over-Sunday guests. They consist of one and two sleeping rooms, with sitting room and bath. They are approached by a separate corridor, and have an entire set of electric bells, which ring to any part of the house. One or two hosts have added to this set bells to the coach house, where a guest may ring for any trap or horses put at his or her disposal.

The Clarence Mackays have built their palace—for it can hardly be called a house—at Watch Hill, Long Island, with the idea of these week-end parties in view. Mrs. Mackay devises the most original methods of entertaining her

guests, and comes nearer the European *châtelaine* than anything America has had since the Civil War banished the great hostesses on Southern plantations, which were carried on in feudal manner. The Mackay life suggests this feudal condition, for their place is like a barony, where everybody on the land does tribute to the lord and lady of the manor.

Probably the most famous week-end parties in ultra-fashionable life are those of Georgian Court, where live the George Goulds.

The guests have varied accomplishments, and the hostess offers a display of these in her schedule of entertaining.

Like Mrs. Mackay, she has no idea of inviting stupid or uninteresting people for over Sunday. She has everything to offer that money and brains can suggest, and her plan is to offer these to those who can respond best.

She combines at these week-ends such guests as Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, who is one of the most original women in American social life; Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lehr—and no matter what prejudices people who don't know Mr. Lehr may have against him, it must stand without question that he is one of the most diverting and laughter-compelling guests in society. He is born to make fun wherever he goes. He is the ideal entertainer at a week-end party.

Ethel Barrymore was another of the party, and if she had only her beauty she would be alluring, but she adds wit, magnetism and tact. Mr. and Mrs. Pembroke Jones were an addition that spells success. Mrs. Gould arranges for each guest to follow out his or her especial fad or pastime. The music rooms for the music mad, the magnificent stables for the riders, the multitude of traps for the drivers, the swimming pool, billiard room, bowling room, squash and tennis courts for the athletic man or woman, and the golf links for the one who is crazy on the subject of making holes in the shortest time. The motto of Georgian Court is each guest to his own desires. Each guest has her own freedom, and the hostess hers.

The great central court of the house,

with its magnificent tapestries thrown over the balusters, has the freedom and brilliancy of a hotel lounge. Here the guests gather for afternoon tea, for talk and cards after dinner, and here the hostess greets them after breakfast.

There is a theater arranged, where charming plays are given, in which most of her guests are adepts. Here the most notable amateur dancers give dances that the public would pay any price to see, and actresses like Miss Barrymore and Mrs. Gould take leading parts in plays that are called "amateur," but would rank high in professional merit.

The men have a house of their own on the Gould estate which is the newest idea of the week-end parties. This house has its swimming pool, its barber, its exercise machines, and the rooms are arranged with baths and bells that will ring up anybody from a mixer of drinks to a caddy. In this house the men rule supreme. They sleep there, because they prefer it. They may play cards as late as they wish and make as much noise as they please. It is the ideal way of entertaining men.

With all the magnificence and comfort shown to week-end parties at Georgian Court, they are as lamp light to electric light contrasted with those given by the American wife of a certain French count.

One of these at her château in France cost forty thousand dollars. The bills were paid by her American lawyer, who expostulated with her for such extravagance. She asked him as a guest at the next one to prove to him how impossible it was to spend less and entertain pleasure-loving guests of high social stations.

She began her entertaining on Friday afternoon, and it lasted until Tuesday morning. The forty thousand dollars went like shreds of paper before a western gale. The guests were given suites of rooms, with their numerous servants put up in another house. The chauffeurs and valets were entertained according to their degree with the corresponding members of the Castellane retinue. A number of thoroughbred horses were put up in stables fit for

thoroughbred humans to live in. The greatest caterer in France took care of the kitchen, and the meals served were masterpieces of the culinary art. The wines were as costly and rare as a cobweb-covered cellar offers.

On one night was a fancy-dress ball, for which the costumes for each guest were made by a celebrated dressmaker at the order of the count, who, with his notable artistic ability, had designed each so that the picture would be surpassingly harmonious and lovely.

On another evening, after a dinner that would have pleased Savarin, a performance was given by the stock company of one of the famous Paris theaters. Each actor was an artist of high repute, and the play was the revival of a marvelous old one, the settings and gowns for which had been designed and arranged by the host.

These high-minded and capricious Parisian actors had been brought down in a personal car and were enormously paid.

It is this idea of the countess that Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., copied when she brought the entire company of a popular comic opera to Newport to play at her rose ball. Her attempt was a failure. She had forgotten to provide lunch for the dozens of singers who had to rehearse all day at her house, and she had neglected to provide the proper dressing room for the stars. The confusion was so great, and the singers so neglected through ignorance, not malice, that the members of that company have never ceased talking of it. It proves what a costly and tactful feat it must be for the American countess to accomplish when she brings down to the country a really great company of artists and satisfies their every need and caprice.

It is quite probable that she cannot give a house party under forty thousand dollars, if she gives it on this scale. But isn't it rather a high scale for anyone less than royalty?

Among the most delightful of week-end party givers are the Pembroke-Jones', of Wilmington, North Carolina, who have thrown in their social inter-

ests with New York and Newport. It would be quite impossible for either of them to be commonplace. The obvious with them is avoided, if they ever think of it. They give their week-end parties in North Carolina on the sound, outside of Wilmington.

The Newporter who is invited to one feels that it is quite worth while to run down from New York on a private car to stay from Friday to Monday night. The host and hostess who have received the unqualified approval of New York and Newport society are clever enough to be intensely Southern because they are Southerners. The prophet without honor in his own country is not to their liking. They receive the best from the North, and they take it to North Carolina to give the best of the South in return. They delight in their negro cook, and serve to the tired palates used to the caprices of a French chef the glorified hog and hominy of the South.

This consists of perfectly cooked chicken, waffles, sweet potato pones and pies and beaten biscuit. The multi-millionaire Northerner returns home to speak with rolling eyes and uplifted hands of the sheer ecstasy of being a guest at the week-end party of these Carolinians.

Since Mr. Pembroke-Jones went to his first dinner at Mrs. Astor's house he has been a marked man. Society there was too formal for him, and he said so. Good to look at, patrician, sure of himself, with manly poise and fascinating manner, he can say what he chooses. New Yorkers love a sensation, and he gave it to them. He sat through a formal dinner of many guests, of whom he knew only his wife, his hostess and the woman at his side. This was too circumscribed a limit for him. Before the substitute for walnuts and wine came on, he said to his hostess: "I have never felt so lonely in my life. There isn't a soul in the South with whom I break bread that I don't know. Now, I haven't met one of these charming women, and I am desperately anxious to do so."

During the slight pause that followed, a delightful divorcee across the

table leaned over and, looking under the mass of flowers, said: "I am Mrs. Blank, and I know quite well who you are."

Following her lead, a dozen or more women "spoke up," and gave Mr. Jones their names. He made firm friends of each of them before the evening was over, and the story was social property the next day. He invited them then and there to go South with him and see how the Southerners knew each other. He insisted that he was quite sure some of them must be related to him, and before his private car started for Carolina with his guests they were all "cousining" him. It is rather easy to imagine what kind of a week-end party such a host could give.

While it is true that a certain amount of freedom is given to the hostess by this new development in entertaining, it is equally true that there are other duties which she must in no way omit. Some hostesses do omit them, excusing their action on the ground that fashionables do it. But good manners never change, and for a hostess to be utterly neglectful of the arrival of her guests can only be put down as a breach of good manners.

She should dine, or, rather, take the first meal with them on their arrival. She should have them met at the station by some member of the family, not merely the coachman and footman, unless the guest is an intimate and frequent visitor.

No caprice of fashion could excuse a certain rich hostess in Newport, who invited a Philadelphia girl of old family and narrow opportunities to be a guest at a week-end party. The girl arrived, palpitating with excitement and a little awed by the prospect before her. She had to hunt a half hour for her hostess' trap at the station, drive to the house alone, was met by a footman at the door, shown by a maid to her room, and was told that her hostess had gone out for lunch, would take a drive afterward, and she hoped the girl would make herself comfortable until the dinner hour.

The hostess met her guest in the

drawing room fifteen minutes before a formal dinner was served, and did not see the girl until the next morning at luncheon. This might have been well enough with a guest who was a cosmopolitan and could fall in naturally to the engagements of her hostess, but it was a serious lack of manners to show to a guest who was unused to an elaborate social life, and who was naturally made ill at ease by such negligence.

It is the duty of a guest to write or wire her time of arrival to her hostess if she changes it from the hour arranged, and this hour is always set by the hostess in her letter of invitation. This is a courtesy on her part to keep the guest from the trouble of looking up trains. A fashionable hostess always puts in her note of invitation that the carriage will meet a certain train. The guest must not take any other but this. To do so would be bad form.

If the party is large, the hostess provides enough traps to comfortably seat every one, and instructs the footman to look after the luggage with speed and accuracy. A charming hostess is always in the hall or sitting room, waiting to receive her guests. The drawing room is considered too formal for such reception. As a rule, the guests are at once sent to their rooms, where maids and men are waiting to receive them.

If they arrive before a formal meal, they are told by the hostess the hour of the meal, and the guests are expected to be prompt in their return downstairs in this case.

If the arrival is in the morning or afternoon, the hostess announces whatever she has arranged, and the guests are entirely at liberty to decline or accept, unless the hostess has accepted an invitation in their name.

Freedom is the keynote of these week-end parties. The hostess does as she pleases with her morning hours, and is not expected to see her guests until luncheon. There is no breakfast, and no one is expected to come to the table, though many do straggle in at any hour they wish. Each guest is shown the different bells in her room, and when

she awakes she rings for her personal maid, if she brings one, or the maid allotted to her. She orders her breakfast as though she were in a hotel, being courteous enough to confine herself to regular dishes. Usually it is only a matter of coffee and toast, with an egg and fruit. The maid wheels a small table to her bed or in a patch of sunshine at the window, and takes out her negligee and bedroom slippers after she draws her bath. When the guest is ready for her breakfast it is there, daintily placed on the small table with a bunch of flowers and sometimes a note from the hostess. In this note she often outlines the engagements for the day.

The guest then dresses and goes downstairs, or, if she wishes, pays room calls on the other guests.

It is quite usual for one guest to ask another to breakfast with her, to have a cozy talk over the coffee. The hostess is given her morning by the guests in order to consult with her head servant, dictate her mail and orders to her secretary, see her children and overlook the dozen details that a successful hostess must attend to.

The question of the morning hours is usually left absolutely free to choice. Couples may breakfast early and go off for a canter or a game of squash or golf; men may order their coffee at daybreak and ride after the hounds. Anyone who chooses may take his bath in the swimming pool, if there is one, and those who wish may make engagements with outsiders for any hour between coffee and luncheon.

For the afternoon there are usually recreations arranged, but a clever hostess never compels her guests to take part in them.

Dinner is a distinct episode, and its hour of serving must be conscientiously observed. Full dress is worn by men and women, and it is discourteous to be absent from this meal for any reason. Neither does a guest accept an evening engagement unless her hostess suggests it. And she must never make arrangements for outsiders to call in the evening unless with the full and gracious permission of the head of the house.

The morning belongs to the guests; the evening belongs to the hostess.

The hostess of ten years ago would not comprehend such freedom in entertaining.

She and the guest usually bored each other to death without being frank enough to say so. It was considered necessary for them to be together from waking until sleeping, and human nature rarely stands the strain of such intimacy. The hostess came to her guest's room constantly to see if everything was all right; the family sat down punctually to the breakfast table; they made no arrangements in which both were not included, and they usually wished themselves separated before the end of the week.

One doesn't swim easily at first in these foreign waters. The plunge is a bit severe, and one must get accustomed to the seeming coldness and the current before one actually enjoys the social exercise. The novice in society—the girl accustomed to the old-fashioned methods of being entertained—is apt to think she is being vastly neglected because her hostess doesn't come to bid her good-morning with her coffee and kiss and tuck her in when she goes to sleep.

A more difficult obstacle to overcome is the continuous service and pretentious attitude of the army of servants, especially the ones detailed for room service. One girl said she kept awake all night devising methods by which she could shoo the maid out of the room when she wanted to put on linen that had been worn before.

Another young matron who was a guest at a Newport week-end party found she didn't have a fresh pair of white stockings to wear with her white shoes. She wouldn't dare tell the very grand maid that she was out of white stockings, having worn a dozen pairs in four days, and she didn't dare put on a pair she had worn the day before, under the disapproving glance of this French woman. So when she took a bath she took the stockings with her and washed them out in the tub, but there was no sun and she couldn't dry them.

She spent a half hour trying to hide those wet stockings from the ever-present eye of the maid. She knew the whole day would be spoiled for her if she kept up this nervous apprehension. She was to play tennis, and the maid wouldn't tolerate her putting on black shoes and stockings with a white duck suit.

She gulped down the coffee, hardly knew she had burned her throat, and almost forgot to cut the top of the egg and eat it from the shell. Then an inspiration came to her. The silver hot-water kettle! She sent the maid off with a note, wrapped her stockings around the hot metal and deposited it behind the screen. The day was saved.

Men have their troubles with over-fine body servants also. One who was reckless of speech came down to the breakfast table with his host and a few friends and started right in on a protest.

"That valet of yours, whom you detailed to wait on me, hides my dress shirts. I have stood it for three days, and I won't stand it to-night. He puts them in the laundry bag, and I have only worn them two hours apiece. I have to earn my living. I can't afford a clean dress shirt every night. I haven't enough to go around, and laundry is too expensive." Then he laughed, while his host and guests were shouting, and added: "I got ahead of him this morning. He's so English he's stupid. I took off my dress shirt last night, borrowed an electric iron from my wife, pressed it out and locked it up in my trunk. When he takes it out to-night he will think it's a fresh one."

One of the best reasons for the week-end party developing into an epidemic in fashionable American society is the fascinating nature of the entertainment provided.

Polite vaudeville is the thing. To dance, to sing dialect songs, to cake-walk, to do legerdemain, is required from most of the guests. You may not be extra well born, nor have a pedigree as good as the blue ribbon dog in the kennel, but if you can do "stunts" you will be a popular guest at week-end parties.

# THE HOUR OF THE DRIVE

By Anna A. Rogers



It was the hour of the drive toward which the whole sweltering day trends; for which heroic, gasping, dripping efforts are made at an *al fresco* toilet.

The drive was the woman's part in those earliest days of American occupation, and it was not without its tiny quota of heroism, even among so many claimants in the year of grace 1898.

Mrs. Parksberry's little black, ratlike ponies scampered once more along the crowded, narrow, sordid streets of un-beautiful Manila; tropical, and yet strangely treeless and flowerless; foreign, and yet with scarcely a single salient feature outside of the old fort; hybrid in people, costume, customs and architecture.

The tiny ponies flew at the top of their trotting speed—the only living creatures, except the ants, that moved faster than a crawl within the city limits.

Over the Puente d' España, across the plaza, over the bridged moat, through outer and inner gates into the walled city; beside high stone walls covered with the only wayward green in town, to the Fuerza de Santiago, for it was too early by a full hour for the music on the Luneta, and there was a call to be made on an army friend—the magic of a common exile turning an ancient indifference into a young, warm affection.

When the victoria stopped, Mrs. Parksberry and her niece, Isabel Ken-nion, got out at the door of the only set of quarters inside the fort habitable for women.

Twelve young officers, who had seen

Isabel descend from the carriage, took occasion to call upon the major's wife while the girl was there; and eight of them asked her to abandon her aunt and drive or walk with them on the Luneta, just over the western wall.

She refused them all, in that way she had of secretly conveying to each one the conviction that but for the harassing presence of the other eleven, she would have gone with him. There were only two American girls in the city in those days, and Isabel was one. Twenty-seven men of the army and navy had been known to call upon her in one day, so she managed a paltry dozen with ease. Then she drove away with her aunt, and Pedro took them through the narrow Postigo Gate out upon the Luneta.

Looking like lichens clinging on the walls and ramparts overlooking the bay, were the Spanish prisoners in their blue-gray cotton uniforms, their pale, degenerate faces watching silently their young, undegenerate conquerors.

*Quiles, calesas, carrrometos, carruajes*, tiny victorias, the *vis-à-vis*, the "mild," men on horseback, and all the world wore white; for it was before the reign of the khaki in the Philippines, before the Spanish army went home.

Even the few carriages of fresh-faced, well-robed American women helped to impress upon the Spaniards, Filipinos, Mestizos, spying insurgents—all agape—the conviction that a great nation, strong in numbers, health and the power of money; strong in straight-backed, firm-mouthed women born to play the pioneer beside husband, brother, or son—a great nation had come, and come to stay, if it so willed.

"It always looks to me like a huge



sheet-and-pillow-case party, aunty," commented Isabel, as they swept out into the pretty whirl of the crowded Luneta.

"And after the sun sets it's a world of ghosts of many nationalities, who have for generations been coming to the Luneta night after night, just as we do, to breathe and get sane again."

"Ah, these sunsets! There's nothing else really worth while out here—they redeem and make exquisite things that are less than insignificant. Oh, aunty, there's the colonel! I do hope he'll hold up his fingers to us to-night."

"Sure to, as we are alone—only, Belle, do let's put some value on ourselves—'save our faces,' as the Chinese say—and don't let's see him for the first half hour. Wait till at least three men are talking to us when the carriages get blocked. Then, if he holds up his hand, we'll go to the dear old 'Life-Saving Station,' and—have some lemonade. He's our Beau Brummel, our Grammont, our Corinthian, our *arbitrator elegantiarum*, our—what's that man in 'Quo Vadis'?"

"Oh, Aunt Kate! he isn't as bad as that. He's neither a *poseur* nor a prig; he's delightfully human, seems to me."

"Who said 'prig'? The colonel? Not he! I only said he had good taste—"

"Wait till we see if he signals to us!" laughed Isabel.

"*Pedro, no ande V. tan de priesa.*"

"Good gracious, Aunt Kate, where and when did you get all that fluency?" laughed the girl.

"Page thirty-eight, eleven-thirty this morning; and if I can't practice my Spanish on my own coachman, I'd like to know whose coachman I— Oh, Belle, they're playing that lovely thing Tom's so fond of! Listen! What's the name? Somebody wrote it—well, it's an opera, anyhow, and it's heavenly."

"I should not have identified it from your vivid description, Mrs. Parksberry!"

"What does happen to our brains out here, anyhow? Mine feels like—melted butter looks. Another six months on the equator and I'll be a driveling

idiot for life. Tom says he sees the change in me from week to week. A newspaper man told me the other night that he would not stay the year out if the home office quadrupled his pay—he simply wouldn't dare to. Why, he couldn't even remember who wrote—now, what on earth was the name of that book? It's gone completely. There's an example for you! He actually turned pale as he sat staring blankly at me, and he said: 'It means my bread and meat and—hers.' Poor fellow, he's got to go home."

Pedro, very stiff and grand in his white duck livery, held up his whip as they again neared the band stand, and joined the jam of carriages just in time to secure a good position. It was before the drive was organized, and there was great confusion.

"Ah, so different from the dear old days," whispered the Spaniards, "when his excellency the bishop alone was allowed to stop his carriage, and society passed in review before his excellency. What do these people know of civilized ways—*los Estados Unidos*! It is not even a name, it is but a condition!"

"But their women! *Ave!*" risked a young Spanish officer—and regretted it. His Mestizo wife and her mother and sister were all in the mother's carriage. Pale, powdered, hatless women—it was too hot for even the mantilla—all staring with big, bovine eyes, eager for all the novelties of that early transition time—and hating, as women do.

Over in the eastern sky was a wonderful gloom of green and inky black, picked out against a dull shield of silver. The west let the east have its little half hour of color, biding its time.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Parksberry. May I present Mr. St. John?" The colonel himself had joined them, tall, spare, smooth-faced, very soldierly, with gray eyes full of an unquenchable sadness. However merrily his tongue ran on, however loudly his laugh rang out, they never changed. There were many others of corresponding rank in and about the city, but he remained "*the* colonel." One never heard his name from one month's end to the other.

The introductions were made, and the colonel leaned forward with his foot on the low step of the carriage, talking to Mrs. Parksberry, whom he had known, as she expressed it, "exactly two hundred and three years."

Mr. St. John's gaze paced like a sentinel back and forth between Isabel's hair and her eyes—for the first was gold with touches of brown in the shadows, and the eyes were brown with a glint of gold in their depths, and it was a very pretty little study in proportion.

Isabel prided herself upon her tact. She was willing to sacrifice all sorts of small unessential moralities to saying the right thing. Her friends said that this amiable weakness was rooted in a very tender heart; her detractors knew the love of approbation when they saw it!

Running her glance over Mr. St. John's collar and shoulders and finding no insignia, she ventured, turning her head so that the colonel should not hear:

"Thank Heaven! just a plain man, at last! Swear you're not a hero, Mr. St. John! It's heresy and schism, but I'm tired to death of heroes!"

He was puzzled for an instant, and then a quick smile came to his thin, worn face—a very keen, spiritual face with dark eyes.

"Just a plain man—at your service!"

"If you knew what I've been through out here. Heroes morning, noon and night. Aunt Kate says there's nothing else here—except mangoes! I'm kept on tiptoe to breathe the same rarefied air as these persistent, unrelenting heroes—I'm worn out admiring them."

"Behold the 'sweet, oblivious antidote!' he laughed, tapping his chest.

"Oh, the relief, the blessed relief!" she mocked, softly, raising her hands.

"If you only knew! It's all a blood-and-thunder, hair-lifting, barn-storming melodrama out here, with scenery like that sky over there to match. And I? I am a woman of peaceful conventionalities, like symphony concerts and 'varnishing' days."

"What brought you here, then, fair lady, if I may ask?"

"Oh, this aunt of mine—she adores the whole thing and thought I would."

He watched her with twinkling eyes. His profession was reading between the lines of what people said and thought, and he knew she was posing for his benefit; letting herself down to his supposedly unmilitary level, giving him his own niche in that gallery of uniformed men. It was Isabel's way, and her reputation had already reached him. He was vastly diverted.

"My main objection to a hero is that he's a bore, according to one of the accepted definitions. Just once in a while I like to be the topic of conversation. That's only natural, isn't it?"

"I should have supposed that Miss Kennion would have liked the very novelty of not being."

"Oh, thanks! But, you see, I said I loathed novelty." The mischief in her soft, young face was a delightful thing to watch.

"If so," spoke up the colonel, who had overheard the last sentence, "then you'll come to 'The Life-Saving Station' with Mrs. Parksberry after the music is over."

"He has good taste, aunty! We've been in such terror lest you were not going to include us to-night, colonel," the girl cried, with dancing eyes.

"Isabel!" scolded Mrs. Parksberry.

"Aunt Kate simply adores that last thing with vermouth in it that you've been offering her lately, colonel. I do wish you could hear her from the moment she wakes!"

"Pedro, home! Alas, that the *Oriente* of these times should be that to any of God's creatures!" Pedro glanced back at her blankly—she had been careful to speak in English. They all laughed, largely because Mrs. Parksberry expected it.

Society, in fair exchange for good-naturedly accepting one's estimate of oneself, offers a certain number of surface emotions, always on ready tap—a laugh, a clap of the hands, even a tear—it is very little trouble and keeps the ball a-rolling.

The band was playing "My Maryland," and they all kept silence and

watched the wonder of the sky. Mr. St. John felt that that was the real Isabel Kennion unmasked, as she sat with an uplifted expression watching the west, a world of gold, with piles of cumuli rising like incense before the altar of the sun. It was the face of a woman who, although a very successful part of the social system, held her real self aloof; the eyes and lips had the look of one who had never loved in return for all that which had flooded her young life.

John St. John smiled to himself, for he read written plainly on her rapt, unconscious face, a vast unworn idealism, a love of the big things in life, perhaps a power for that heroic action she had been pretending to scorn.

Her aunt's humorous, enlightened old face, with the same laughing eyes, only blue, was in charming contrast. He must see more of them. They were the only women who interested him that first night on the Luneta after many weeks of absence, supposedly in Hongkong, but in reality in disguise, *perdu*, out on the Dulumbayan Road near the leper hospital.

Several youngsters from the fort and fleet strolled up, visiting from carriage to carriage, and lounged about Mrs. Parksberry's, on Isabel's side.

The youngest of them said, when the music stopped, with the air of a man of almost burdensome experience:

"Colonel, these Spanish and Mestizo women are not half bad, are they? Beauty among them and a margin over, eh?"

The colonel looked through the lad as if he were glass, smiled, and left the dangerous question to the ladies.

"Beauty!" promptly scorned Aunt Kate, as had "*la madre*" in the Spanish carriage a half hour earlier. "*Donde* the beauty? *Los ajas*, perhaps, but the—the—colonel, what's that word I want? I *will* speak the language before Tom sends me home, even if my own flesh and blood ridicule me"—she glared at Isabel. "*Fiente?*" No, that won't do. *La cara?* Oh, yes, thanks! '*La cara que fes! que*—perfectly horribly soggy and pudgy and—and *fes!*'"

"I am obliterated!" said the rash youth, bowing low as if before the guillotine.

Mrs. Parksberry swept on. "It's the funniest thing about me—and the languages! After twenty years of knocking about all over the watery globe trying to catch up with Thomas Parksberry, here I am fort——"

"Ahem!" coughed the colonel, in time.

"Thanks! here I am thirty-nine years old, and I still get cheated in five languages—some worse than others, of course. Tom says I travel too fast for my accent! Just when I'm getting a fair hold on Italian, I have to go to Paris, where I can speak nothing at first but the language of Naples; then just as I net a few flying French verbs, off I go to Southampton, where I begin to speak French with an almost perfect accent! And so it goes. I suppose my Spanish roots will begin to bloom and blossom when I reach Japan next spring!"

The band began "The Star-Spangled Banner," and every voice ceased, every hat was lifted, shoulders stiffened, faces became grave and full of purpose.

Spanish officers who had given the order to fire a few months before, who have been sitting in their carriages six feet away from the Americans upon whom they fired, at the first note of the national hymn hurry away into the darkness, as the prisoners have already done from the ramparts. The young nation is left alone with bared heads, as in prayer, sponsors at the christening of a younger nation into a regeneration of ideals, very different from their inherited one of mixed Malay and Latin standards.

"May I tell Pedro to drive to my quarters, Mrs. Parksberry?"

"Not to-night, colonel; my feelings are hurt, and I've got to punish Isabel."

"Then to-morrow night?"

"With pleasure, if you'll dine afterward at the hotel with us. Yes? Good, that will be delightful."

"Any chance of seeing you on the Luneta to-morrow evening, Miss Kennion?" asked St. John, in a low tone.

"To-morrow and to-morrow, and yet to-morrow! The hour of the drive is all we women live for."

"Till then!" he cried, and lifted his hat, and stepped back.

"Pedro, *á la posada!*" ordered Mrs. Parksberry, and they swept down the Malecon.

As St. John had made room for the carriage to pass on, Isabel's heart stood still, for he limped painfully! She had made a horrible blunder! If he limped in the Philippines, he was a hero—the two conditions were inseparable, she had found. And now she thought of it, surely that was reproach in his dark eyes!

The blood-red in the west had died in an instant; there was no afterglow, just the look of death everywhere, soft grays and a glistening pallor, and then the stars came quickly, and coolness, and the quiet night.

## II.

As it turned out, Isabel drove with the colonel the next evening, because Captain Parksberry came up on twenty-four hours' leave from his ship, and of course his wife made everything and everybody give way to her Tom's pleasure, and his place was on her left in the carriage, and a note to the "only colonel" had done the rest.

Mrs. Parksberry's programs were very apt to be carried out, and the two carriages kept more or less together all the evening. After a rapid scamper around the Santa Mesa Road, they fell into line once more in the crush about the band stand.

"There's one person I want to speak to for a moment, colonel," said Isabel, glancing about right and left.

"Happy one!" murmured the colonel. "Of course it's a man?"

"Just a plain man," yes," she replied, a trifle wistfully.

"Well, if he comes among the hordes who will soon be upon us, close your fan and put it on the seat, and—leave the rest to me."

"Ah, colonel, no wonder Aunt Kate raves over you!"

"Does she? How very nice!" he said, in a tone that made her turn and look sharply at him. He was laughing—all but the great gray eyes.

The hordes descended as the colonel predicted, but Isabel's fan remained open upon her lap. The sunset was pink and silver that night—silver in the east, and pink running to the color of blood later on in the west.

The two carriages kept on the outer line that evening, close to the edge of the bay, and after several slow rounds they stopped there.

It was the night of the artillery band, and it was doing its best, because to-morrow night its bumptious rival, a certain infantry band, would be given a chance to publicly prove its inferiority.

The leader of the artillery band was a Pole, and melancholy held sway over his repertoire.

It affected even Isabel, and she became so absent-minded that the white ranks about the colonel's carriage began to thin out and gather about Mrs. Parksberry's carriage, for she was proof against even a Polish mood.

A slight figure with a marked limp advanced toward the colonel's carriage.

Isabel closed her fan and placed it on the seat behind her.

"You're just the man I wanted, St. John!" exclaimed the colonel in his cordial way, getting out of the carriage and shaking the other man's hand warmly.

"Miss Kennion, you remember Mr. St. John?" queried the colonel, wick- edly.

"Mr. St. John," murmured Miss Kennion, looking very demure, with a slight flush on her cheeks, but otherwise not committing herself.

"There's a man just in from Hong-kong further down the Luneta, and I want to ask him some questions about that Indian khaki. Will you take my seat for ten minutes or so, St. John? And see that you hold it tight. I won't give it up to the generalissimo himself! You'll pardon me, I hope, Miss Kennion?"

"I shall not grant it till I test the quality of your substitute, colonel," the

girl said, pretending to be offended, and then looking from one to the other in smiling witchery.

The colonel went off laughing, muttering to himself: "Jove, she's like Kathie!"

"Mr. St. John—" Isabel began, breathlessly.

"Miss Kennion!" he lifted his hat again, as he entered the carriage and sat beside her. The heavens, and the earth, and the sea, lapping softly so near their feet, were dyed pink. The music seemed but part of the unreality of the scene. It was not any of it true—all this—the pink world, or the music, or the man beside her. It was a sort of a dream of a picture once seen long ago. Nothing really mattered in life; to *be* was enough—without past or future.

"I am so unhappy!" murmured Isabel, all that was left of the impassioned apology she had been planning.

"Let mine be the hand to slay the monster!"

"It would be—suicide!" One pathetic glance from the golden-brown eyes, and then she looked down at her hands lying in her lap. He laughed, and the color deepened in her face. He almost knew what it was all about, but it was Miss Kennion, so he could not feel sure, and he was not going to help her. A man does not willingly cut short a delicious moment.

"Of course, what I said last night, Mr. St. John, was not true—not in the least true."

"Alas, what one says 'last night' so seldom is!" he sighed.

He was such a conversational comfort, whoever or whatever he might be, she thought. She reached back for her fan and fingered it nervously, still with lowered lids.

"I mean all that silly nonsense about heroes and—and all that! I don't mean one word of it, you must know that. You must know how fine I think it all is out here—I mean the men and their courage, and the whole scale of the thing. And it's like drawing teeth to get a man to talk of any but the other fellow's courage. I was only talking—"

"Down to my level?" he said, smiling at her deprecating pose and changing color. As he watched her it came over him that, perhaps, it was as well that he had been kept so long out on the Dulumbayan Road. He was in Manila for a purpose, with no time for the game of hearts. A political faction at home was even then impatient for his notebook. He made the most of his mission to himself, feeling the need of defense against the vibrating magnetism of the girl beside him.

"Now that I know, Mr. St. John, that you are—"

"How *did* you find me out?" he cried, thinking of one thing, while she meant another.

She slowly raised her eyes and looked into his; she was speechless with discomfort, conscious only of that pitiful limp of his and the unthought of impossibility of speaking of it. Her eyes filled with tears.

"Why, my dear child!" he cried, in expostulation.

"Please!" she coaxed, and the expression of suffering, humility and excitement he read in her face he found altogether adorable.

But just then the colonel strolled back. The keen gray eyes took inventory of their two faces, and he felt sure they were by no means talked out, so he said as St. John abandoned his seat:

"St. John, you may not know it, but you're not in society out here till you join the 'Sign of the Two Fingers,' is he, Miss Kennion?"

"Show him the signal, colonel!" she exclaimed, relieved at the interruption. But the old officer only smiled, and she went on:

"You see, the colonel's quarters are known as 'The Life-Saving Station,' over there on the Calle Isaac Peral. And every evening on the Luneta he holds up two fingers to whomsoever pleases his royal highness, and that is the signal to drive over there after the band goes. Such gay, delicious times as we all have over there! Old Mrs. Kent is there every night, isn't she, colonel?"

"I generally find her in my big chair

waiting when we get there. Sometimes the judge is with her, and sometimes she's there all alone, half asleep, and very cross, if we are late. And yet, St. John, all she takes is ginger ale—it's too funny! Well, come over and see for yourself. The band's getting ready for the benediction now—see the Spaniards scuttle!"

"Did I do the right thing, Miss Kenion?" asked the colonel, as they flew toward his quarters, Mrs. Parksberry's and three other carriages following.

"You, colonel? Did you ever do anything else?" flattered the girl, with a girl's pretty privilege in talking to an old man.

"Once," he said, quietly.

"I wish I could say as much! I've just made the most awful mistake of my very many in my life!"

"That's what mine was! Shall we tell each other some day?" he exclaimed, suddenly.

"All right—some day."

And then they arrived at his quarters, a nipa house, with four living rooms on the second floor. She stopped to pat the Japanese pug, and tease the monkey in the *porte-cochère*.

"Colonel! colonel!" came a thin, irritable voice from above.

"She's up there!" whispered the colonel to Isabel, laughing; then raising his voice, he shouted: "Coming, my dear madam, coming at once!"

All the other carriages dashed up, Mr. St. John's little *calesa* the last, out of which he got with such difficulty that Isabel's cheeks burned; and an impulse to go very far in her *amende* swept over her as, chattering and laughing, the little party went up the stairway to the *estrado*.

A very tiny, very old, very cross American woman sat waiting for them, and told them promptly they were fifteen minutes late.

"There was an encore," some one explained, as they all approached and made much of her.

"Where's the judge?" asked their host, genially, rejoining them, after a brief order to one of his native "boys,"

which resulted in a jingling of ice out in the dining room.

"Twenty years since I've answered *that* question!" cackled the old lady, grimly.

Then her ginger ale came, and was proffered by the colonel himself with a flourish, and only after Mrs. Kent sat sipping contentedly were the others served. The women drank lemonade or aerated waters, all but Mrs. Parksberry, who gave the colonel an appealing glance that resulted in something with a dash of vermouth in it.

"I'm old enough to have the courage of my vices!" she announced.

"I'm too old!" snorted old Mrs. Kent, and the men shouted.

"Captain Parksberry, I think I've got some 'Navy Sherry' outside, if you'll come out and help me hunt for it," said the colonel to the naval officer, who laughed as he arose, saying: "Seems to me you army fellows have got rather a soft thing of it out here! *Wein, weib, und gesang!*"

"Yes, the *gesang* does come later," cried an army surgeon, who took nothing of the colonel's store, having need of all his strength. It was he who made Mrs. Parksberry sit down a little later at the piano, and play a two-step, and then all of them but Mrs. Kent and Mr. St. John danced over the polished floor. The colonel was dancing with Isabel when, after two rounds, she said it was too hot, and stopped near where St. John stood, leaning by the open window, looking on. She could not dance with her usual glad freedom, knowing that there was a ripple in the room debarred forever from that sweet foolishness. She stood beside him in a very melting mood, but somehow her chance for an explanation never came; of course, it was not possible, but it almost looked as if he were bent upon avoiding it. Some one just out from the States sang a comic song new to them; then it took their fancy, and they all danced to it, singing as they whirled. The Filipino women next door watched and whispered, but in the end the old mother said: "No, you are all wrong. They are but children at play, and mark



my words—those who play well will work as well!"

Mrs. Parksberry had to make the move to go, for Mrs. Kent was apparently good for the night, once having achieved her innocent, antepandial potation.

As the colonel's carriage caught up with the Parksberrys' on the bridge, the captain stood up and shouted back:

"Let's dine at the café instead!"

"At your service, good sir!" yelled back the colonel.

As they turned off to the right on the Escolta, Isabel looked back and saw directly behind them Mr. St. John alone in his *calesa*.

As long as she lived, Isabel was thankful that she then and there yielded to her impulse, and sent the colonel to invite the lonely man to join their little party. His pleasure was obvious.

It was late when they separated on the veranda of the café overhanging the river; and still Isabel had not found her opportunity to thrash out the subject that obsessed her in the presence of this young man. The conversation had been general, either very serious or very light, as it was apt to be in those days, and the *rapprochement* between the two young people was broken. As St. John listened to the two older men discussing with grave faces the perplexities ahead of the American occupation, the purposes of his own mission reasserted themselves, and he made up his mind to put a full stop to the emotional episode he saw looming very near. Even a very little later he might lack the will to do it—it must be done at once.

As St. John took her hand in bidding her good-night at the carriage door, she noticed that his was very cold. He held her for a moment with his eyes, then began to laugh, and, leaning toward her, said in a low tone:

"Please don't look so sorry for me, you break me all up; and—it's all a pose, you know—I swear I'm no hero! It's—it's muscular rheumatism. Good-night."

"Pedro, á la posada!" commanded Mrs. Parksberry.

"Sí, señora."

### III.

There was an interval of several eventful weeks before any American women drove on the Luneta. There was no music, the driveway was deserted save by some of the rich natives, bent on proving their disassociation with what was going on; and the families of the Spanish officers, who came every night and watched the horizon out across the bay for the ships that Spain had promised to send to bear them home. But the sun set in a new glory each evening, whatsoever human eyes beheld the wonder of it.

The world of American men had disappeared, some of the women fretted and fumed in picturesque exile on the transports, some remained like prisoners in the hotel, and gleaned what they could from their windows.

They were weeks of battle, murder and sudden death to more than one of their friends. Men who had looked up and waved smiling at the windows of watching women in the hotel, had gone out to the firing line, always followed by the Chinamen and their spades; and a few hours later they were brought back, and as they passed they neither looked up nor smiled, nor waved to the watching women. And the Chinamen straggled back, very tired and dusty, with bits of fresh earth still sticking to their spades.

The colonel had been sent to the front. His coachmen took charge of his nipa house, rubbed the floors, and fed the pug and the monkey.

One afternoon late in February, Isabel leaned on her elbows gazing down at the carabao "wallow," just below Aunt Kate's window. Two wide-spreading horns and the tip of a nose were all that represented a blissful buffalo in the hour of his ablution—without which he went mad.

Aunt Kate was on the floor, cutting out an organdie tea gown. A Filipino seamstress squatted beside her, sewing on a hand sewing-machine, and crooning a Tagalog love song, one verse over and over again.

Mrs. Parksberry had just cut out two

sleeves for one arm, and had no more material, and so she cried out suddenly:

"Crispina, if you don't stop that awful song, I'll choke you, and go gladly to be electrocuted for it. *Éstase V. quieto!* Do you hear? I will not have that verse again! If you know another verse—*sabé V.* another—*sabé V. muy palabra?*"

Crispina giggled and whirled faster and faster the handle of the little American machine, the possession of which had for years brought her in one Mexican a day, and now in these exciting times she got two Mexicans a day from the rich Americans!

In two minutes she was crooning her melancholy whine again.

"Crispina!" screamed Mrs. Parksberry, finding that the goods had "a right and wrong." The sewing *amah* stopped and looked up, startled.

"Crispina, what does it mean, your song?" asked Isabel in her Spanish, already fairly fluent, to her aunt's despair.

"Huh, señorita, it says: 'He comes to-night! One, two, three, four—the clock, señorita!—'Tis day! He came not. I wonder why! I wonder why!'"

"Now, isn't that precisely like a Filipino woman to sit and wonder why all her life, instead of hustling around and finding out why he didn't turn up?" growled Aunt Kate; and Crispina, who, of course, did not understand a word, giggled again and tossed back her great cape of hair, under which she was persistently tented, to the further disturbance of Mrs. Parksberry's serenity.

"'Tis day—he came not. I wonder why!'" repeated Isabel in English.

"You must miss them—the men, I mean. I'm sure I do! I haven't seen a man I know for two weeks, except out of that window through my opera glasses. Tom writes that if he won't let his officers come ashore in these parlor times, he's not coming ashore himself. It's noble of him—of course, I know it's noble and all that—but I've sometimes thought lately, Isabel, that a less perfect man than your Uncle Thomas would have suited me better!"

"You don't expect to be believed

when you talk that way, Aunt Kate, I suppose?"

"I'd like to catch you, or anyone else, ever believing anything *any* one says against Tom Parksberry!" fumed the older woman, slapping the scissors so violently down on the bare floor that Crispina jumped, giggled, and then trailed absent-mindedly off into her croon: "He comes to-night!"

"That settles it! Crispina, go home! Good-night. Take all your things and bundle yourself off. It's the hour of the drive, and my nerves are sitting on the outside of my skin. I can't stand anything more to-day. The drive for us is what the wallow is to the buffalo—we run amuck if we don't get it."

Crispina arose, wide-eyed with dismay; she had been so contented working under her hairy canopy, of which she was so justly proud; what could have come over the American señora? She had, perhaps, offended—but how? Blessed Virgin! perhaps the señora had discovered that she sewed for the Spanish ladies for one-half of her price for the rich Americans! If she had discovered that!

"Poor little Crispina! My aunt is very tired, that is all, and it is very hot, and we cannot drive, you know—that is all. You may go home and—aunt, do you care to have Crispina again?"

"Why, of course! I'm perfectly devoted to her. If she dares to go to that Mrs. Lefebre! I want her at nine tomorrow morning, and you tell her if her hair isn't done up tight on the top of her pretty little head, I'll cut it off with these scissors—the hair I mean. Now, you tell her exactly what I say."

Crispina's dark face cleared. She gathered up her little belongings, stored her precious machine in a corner, and slipped out of the room. As she closed the door, once more they heard coming softly from her childish lips: "I wonder why! I wonder why!"

"And now I'm going to drive!" announced Mrs. Parksberry. "I'm tired of being a prisoner."

"Aunt Kate!"

"Well, I am. Headquarters isn't going to scare me any longer—nor cur-

few laws keep me from the Luneta. Headquarters wants us to have such a stupid, horrid, scary time out here—without a man to bless ourselves with—that we'll get bored and go home! That's what they want. It's like the newspaper man and the censor—it isn't going to be made easy for either of us! But I'd rather be perforated like a cullender than sit another afternoon in this sweltering room, with the monsoon blowing on the *other* side of the hotel! I'm going, Isabel! You can write anything you choose to your Uncle Tom. I'm going alone, with Pedro and the United States army to protect me. No, I wouldn't mind in the least being the first American woman shot in Manila! It would be rather stylish—if my clothes were up to the rôle!"

"All because you cut two sleeves for one arm, auntie—I'm surprised!" laughed her niece.

"Never mind the cause of this attack, it's the effect that I am grappling with."

A loud rap startled them.

"Mrs. Parksberry, Miss Kennion, let me in! I've got a piece of news!"

"It's the Lefebre woman! Don't let her in! I'll open the door at a crack and pretend I'm dressing!" whispered Aunt Kate.

"The colonel has been shot!" cried the voice outside.

"Open the door, Belle!" gasped Mrs. Parksberry, sinking into a chair. Then, as the girl bounded past her, the older woman stopped her, and they faced each other, white to the lips.

"Belle, don't let her have the sensation she craves—disappoint her. Watch me. I don't believe it's true, I don't believe it's true!"

As her niece opened the door, Mrs. Parksberry seized a piece of the tea gown she had been making and bowed her head over it.

"The colonel has been shot!" Mrs. Lefebre was small and dark and tightly laced, and had a flushed, excited, shrewd little face.

"How did you hear?" came slowly from Mrs. Parksberry, in that tone of voice she reserved for people whom

she hated. Isabel sank into the long Chinese chair and listened, with covered eyes.

"Good heavens, what difference does that make, when I say the colonel's shot?" snapped Mrs. Lefebre, chagrined at the reception of her news.

"It makes the difference whether we believe the rumor in this world of rumors, Mrs. Lefebre."

Mrs. Lefebre flounced toward the door, crying: "Oh, well, I thought you'd care!"

"So much do my niece and I care that it will not be easy to convince us that ill has befallen him!" Aunt Kate's voice vibrated.

"Young Flagg dashed in covered with mud and dust five minutes ago, and said he himself helped the colonel to the rear, away from the firing line—he and another man. Does that convince you?"

Mrs. Parksberry looked up for the first time.

"Do you know where they are taking him?"

"Second Reserve, young Flagg said."

"It's a pity we women can't leave the hotel, isn't it, Mrs. Lefebre?—for we might have done something for him. Now, we are helpless."

"Yes, it is too bad. Well, I must go and tell the others—I came here first."

"You are very—kind, Mrs. Lefebre." Mrs. Parksberry stood and inclined her head with grave dignity.

The instant the other left the room, Mrs. Parksberry sprang toward the door and locked it, and then she and Isabel fell into each other's arms, weeping hysterically.

"But I haven't time to cry!" scolded Aunt Kate, dabbing impatiently at her eyes. "And I haven't time to change; I'll go just as I am."

"Go? Go where, aunty?"

"To the hospital, of course. I'll sneak down the back stairs to the stable, and then no one will see me—none of the others, including that Lefebre woman."

"I am going with you," said Isabel, quietly.

Like thieves in the night, or any other

breaker of laws, they slipped along the corridor and down the back way, through ranks of native servants squatting all down the stairway, all smoking, men and women, their cigarettes.

Pedro soon had the carriage ready, and through a back street the two white-clad women sped toward the hospital.

All the world, from the English to the Chinese, stopped and stared after them. An American sentinel now and then presented arms as they passed his post; more than one soldier off duty swept off his campaign hat with a grace that belied more than a very recent alliance with his uniform, and stood smiling broadly at the dear sight of their sweet home faces—his countrywomen, God bless them and—God keep them safe!

"I came to see for myself all this nonsense about the colonel," Mrs. Parksberry announced to the surgeon in charge at the hospital.

"When Mrs. Parksberry comes to see for herself how a thing is, one may as well pass up the keys, and have it over." She did not contradict him.

"It isn't serious, then, doctor."

"Why do you think that, madam?"

"The way you smiled."

"Oh, you women and the colonel! Must the whole world smile or stop smiling, according to the depth of his scratches? It's the other fellow who needs your sympathy."

"What other one?"

"Why, that Secret Service chap who saved the colonel's life. Entered on the books St. John—pronounced Sin-jin, I believe."

Belle put her hand behind her and groped for the back of a chair, and, fortunately, found one. Aunt Kate looked at the girl sharply.

"Fellow with a limp which they say he got in the Transvaal in just such another affair as this—only it was two lives then. They don't seem to know exactly his status out here, even at headquarters."

In the tropics emotions overpower one very easily, and Mrs. Parksberry saw something in her niece's face that

caused her considerable uneasiness. And the girl stood erect and thought passionately: "And the hideous, sickening things that I said to him that first night! Silly, vain fool that I am, craving always to be liked by another, and another, and yet another! Uneasy till I break through a man's indifference! I hate myself, and I could beg his pardon on my knees."

The surgeon left them, and then returned.

"The colonel isn't badly hurt, but a bullet is a shock, if it only nips the flesh. So only one of you ladies can see him to-day, and for exactly three minutes. He seemed to wish it."

"You are young and very good to look at, Belle; he will fall in love with life and try to go on living. You go in," said Aunt Kate.

As they spoke the doctor struck a bell, and a nurse entered.

And so a little cloud of disappointment fell over the colonel's expectant gray eyes as he saw the girl enter escorted by the nurse, who left them together.

But the colonel's words were gay—the words of a soldier unable for once to rise and do a lady honor.

It so happened that there was a sudden emergency in the operating ward, and the nurse was needed, and so Isabel stayed beyond the time allowed, beside the old soldier's cot, and he told her how it all happened—the old story of the "other fellow's" courage and endurance.

"That's what is torturing me, colonel! Do you remember, on the Luneta? I spoke sneeringly to Mr. St. John of sacred things like courage—courage! That splendid thing which gathers up all the days of living, all the forces of one's being into one supreme moment that is the test of all the rest! That is what I *felt*, and when I *spoke* I sneered! That is what I should have said—as a woman, should have stood for always—and now it is too late! Oh, colonel, I cannot bear it!" The tears ran down the girl's face unchecked.

"Hush, hush, little girl! You're all worn out by these terrible weeks. We

all lose our sense of proportion out here. Lord! I'm as bad as the rest. This climate plays the deuce—I beg your pardon! Perhaps you'll get a chance to tell him some day."

"Oh, colonel, I thought——"

"So did I, at first. They're all such a pack of professional liars around a hospital, and are so confounded cheerful—you know that hospital cheerfulness? But I overheard something, and I know that there's just a bare chance that he'll pull through. They're at him now, tooth and nail, poor boy. But I guess if he wants to live bad enough, he'll do it!"

Isabel listened with dilated eyes, and the color ran back to her face as she said in a low tone:

"Colonel, I would like to send a message to him. Do you think——? What can a woman say that's worth while to a man that's just come back from looking over the edge of things?"

"I'll tell him, my dear, that you'll come to see him some day—I can vouch that that's worth while," said the old man, smiling at her; and then partly to divert her, partly because he had always felt strongly impelled to do so, he said:

"And now I'll tell you my regret. I promised to, you know. But first will you do something for me? Would it be too much trouble for you to take off your hat, my dear? Ah—now you look like her—so like her!" The hat with the white roses lay in her lap, and her own troubles melted away as she listened to him.

"It isn't much of a story, after all. Just that years and years ago I loved a young girl, and—well, she didn't love me! That's about the size of it. But I've always thought that I missed my flood tide—I've always thought that my moment came and passed. I didn't speak till too late, the other man got her on the ebb tide. She married him, and is the happiest woman I know, and, of course, he's happy! I couldn't tell you why to save my life, Miss Kennion, but somehow I've never wanted any other woman to be my wife and the mother

of my children. And you are wonderfully like her, my child, wonderfully like the girl I remember."

"Why, then, surely Aunt Kate must remind you too, colonel, we are so absurdly alike!"

He lay on his pillow smiling at her—all but the eyes—his hair as white as its resting place.

"Yes, Aunt Kate does remind me, very often," he said very slowly, but it brought a sudden illumination to the girl, and, starting up, she cried:

"Colonel!" and then the nurse came, and upon her face was a smile.

As they drove out of the hospital gate, and smiled at the sentinel in return for his salute, Isabel exclaimed:

"I want to go to the Luneta! I'm glad there's no music. I want Pedro to drive up and down quickly, quickly, till the air fans our faces and we can pretend that it's cooler. I don't want to talk, please, Aunt Kate. I want to see the water and the sky, and get close, close to something big and enduring!"

"Belle, Belle! There's something in your face to-night which reminds me of that overstrained war correspondent. I'm afraid I'll have to send you home!"

"Not quite yet, please, Aunt Kate," the girl said, quietly.

The little ponies tore madly up and down the deserted Luneta, from the monument to the empty band stand, where finally Pedro, of his own accord, stopped beside the low sea wall.

The glow was gone, they were alone with the stars, and the young moon, and the lapping sea.

The girl's eyes were on the crescent moon, the woman's on the horizon, where far down the bay flashed the searchlights of the American fleet, ever on guard since that day when, like a pack of cards, the destinies were shuffled and new hands were dealt out among the nations of the world.

Placing her hand very gently upon the girl's, the woman finally broke the long silence:

"Pedro, á la posada!"

"Sí, señora."



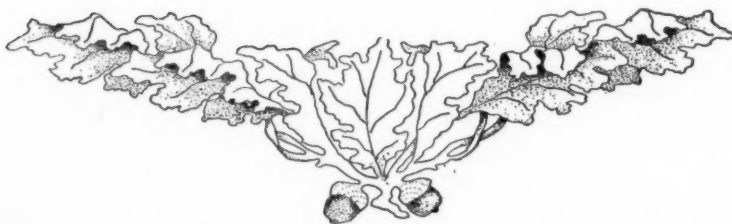
## MARCH

By Margaret Houston

HIGH-HIDDEN in hilltop or cloud,  
Young March is beginning to blow,  
Lusty and loud,  
With saucy cheek puffed and aglow.  
Ho, Winter! Wrap close in your shroud  
And cling to your cap as you go.  
Blow! Blow!  
In laughter leaps over the snow.

He has rattled the reverend oaks,  
He has peeped into bonnets and cloaks,  
Panting nor pausing for rest.  
Blow! Blow!  
Into each cranny he pokes  
His little red nose for a pest.  
Heigh-ho!  
And he laughs like a lord at the jest.

Soft! For the woods are still,  
Sunlit the wide blue air,  
Fragrant and all athrill  
With the throbbing of things that grow,  
With the slow  
Whispers of song that trill  
From the mated pair.  
And lo!  
White-robed, serene and fair,  
The maiden, April, steps adown the hill,  
With violets twined in her leaf-brown hair.





# A CROSSED SCENT

By Vincent Harper

**N**OW, Diana, don't be a ninny! Fordy is the dearest boy in the world—and at my age you will realize the advantages of forty thousand a year. Of course he's a conceited young donkey, and all that, but so are all of them, and few have as much to go on as he," said Mrs. Craigie, a wise woman.

"Oh, it's not the donkey that I object to—it's the horse," replied Diana, tapping the toe of her trim riding boot with her crop and looking, in her smart habit and top hat, the last woman to object to the horse.

"The horse!" exclaimed Mrs. Craigie, laying down her needlework and looking shrewdly at the girl, who stood a picture of cross-country fitness. "That's it, is it? Why, my dear, the horse is an infantile disease that the boy will outgrow. In my case it's different. When I married Randolph he was suffering from acute yachting—and he, of course, recovered; but as he contracted the horse after he was fifty, he is hopeless. Any doctor will tell you that scarlet fever or measles is fatal only with adults. Fordy is not thirty—at forty he'll buy an automobile, go in for collecting old furniture or something, and settle down like a Christian. Anyhow, you know, men will be men, and horses are to be preferred to actresses or any one of a lot of things that it wouldn't be proper for me to mention. So don't, pray, be a fool. The fellow loves you."

"Something higher than his dog, a

little lower than his horse," murmured Diana, pulling on her gauntlets, her head giving a cynical little toss with each pull at the gloves.

"Now, for mercy's sake, don't quote!" retorted Mrs. Craigie; "for that's the one thing that a man like March can't stand. Quoting has broken up more homes than flirtations have. Never let a man dream that you know that you know more than he does."

"Yes," replied Diana, "that's all very well, but fancy living with a man who to all intents and purposes can neither read nor write—only ride, ride, ride—and who envies his groom's knowledge of bran mashes, and spavin, and—oh, it's horrid!"

"Fordy can at least write checks," quietly remarked Mrs. Craigie.

"And read the stud book!" countered Diana. "But why can't he take horses in a rational manner—like the major—"

"Who is twenty years older," countered Mrs. Craigie.

"Or like Lord Bertie, then?"

"Lord Bertie? Why, my dear, pray don't forget that Lord Bertie is to the manor born—born in the saddle—and of course doesn't have to look like a groom nor smell of the stable to prove that he is a cross-country gentleman, like our poor men over here. Some are born horsey—in England—some achieve horsiness—Mr. Craigie, for example—and some have horses thrust upon them—like poor, dear Fordy—when they go in for playing at country gentleman."

This is the sixth in the series of hunting stories now appearing in AINSLEE'S. Those already published are "The First Meet," "By Eminent Domain," "From Saturday to Monday," "The Phantom Ha-Ha," and "Divided," in the October, November, December, January and February numbers respectively.—THE EDITORS.

"Who's quoting now?" laughed Diana. "No, I mustn't sit down, for I'll be late at the meet unless I start at once. By the way, do you realize that this is the last meet of the season? Sorry. How well I remember our first—that is, I mean, Mr. March's first meet as M. F. H."

Mrs. Craigie instantly detected the opening afforded by the young woman's sudden relapse into her wonted, dreamy, sentimental manner, and, once more laying down her work, she rose and pinned a huge bunch of violets on Diana's bodice, and said: "Now, you silly, *do* be sensible, and pity the poor boy. I tell you, he's all broken up over the scandalous way you have thrown him over."

"Nonsense! No, my dear Mrs. Craigie, I really couldn't think of ever dating my letters at 'The Paddock,' or exchanging the Merrill crest on my seal for a snaffle bit pendant from a horse-shoe rampant on a field gules."

"Fudge! To get you, Fordy would burn his big stable of a house, wear regular trousers instead of breeches—yes, and sell even 'Mephisto'; but, at all events, do make his last meet as happy as his first—won't you—to please me?"

"Oh, he'll be happy enough, never fear! Miss Warburton is riding to-day, you know," answered Diana, kissing Mrs. Craigie on each cheek, and darting out of the room with a poor little laugh that revealed much to the astute old lady who, after marrying herself to the richest and kindest—if most Pickwickian—of men, had devoted the thirty years since her maidenhood to marrying all the young women of her acquaintance to the next richest and kindest.

"Miss Warburton, eh? H'm! that is a horse of another color!" thought Mrs. Craigie, and resumed her lacework with much planning and scheming in view of the new situation.

It was a very different Diana who now emerged from the great Tudor portico of "Pen-Craigie," from the one who had carried off the brush at March's first meet. Of course, nature

and the traditions of the blue-grass region of old Kentucky had made her a rider, but Mrs. Dudley-West and the orthodox tailors and bootmakers and saddlers, approved by the fastidious M. F. H., had done the rest. Cracks from Meadowbrook and Philadelphia, and even Lord Bertie, came to speak of Miss Merrill as "the smartest ever," while March, who always found time during a run to look up "Maria's daughter" and to have a canter by her bridle, came to think of her quite as often as he did of his string. In fact, according to the major, who enjoyed singular opportunities for knowing him, March was really in a bad way over the Southern beauty.

Then befell something—just what nobody could guess—and the odds at the club—until then standing at ten to one, that it was an engagement—fell to three to one against that event, with no takers. There had been no quarrel, apparently, for Diana went out of her way to rally to the standard of the M. F. H. whenever his opinions were disputed and those of Lord Bertie were vaunted against him; and March himself seemed to grow more and more desirous of winning her. But that something had suddenly transpired to cheat the gossips out of quite the most piquant morsel of the season was certain, and little by little Diana grew flippant and metallic on the subject of the M. F. H.—which ill became her native winsomeness and candor—and March in turn became fairly reckless and seemed to court every possible opportunity to call out her sarcasms, which were as tabasco sauce for sharpness.

As a matter of fact, some one had come between them—the horse! Riding homeward after the long-famed run, when they had killed at Beekman's, twelve miles away—that was the day that Diana first appeared clothed and in her right mind, according to March's standards—he had blurted out an avowal in his frank, dashing fashion. Alas! Not a finished rhetorician, he had mixed his metaphors so hopelessly, and mingled so much of admiration for the horse with his passionate declaration of

approval of herself, that Maria's daughter, who was also the daughter and granddaughter of governors of Kentucky, and every inch a patrician of the old school, took umbrage at his comparisons—really compliments of the highest order—and declined to entertain the proposition, that she share with his thoroughbreds his affections.

After this Diana adopted a sneering tone toward the horse—whom she loved quite as much as March did—and he of course proceeded to make matters worse in every way known to a lover.

Unfortunately, the sudden arrival of Alice Warburton at "Grantby Hall"—the Grantbys imported her from Baltimore to offset the "Pen-Craigie" importation from Kentucky—gave March an opening to make several kinds of a fool of himself after the manner of those in an advanced stage of fatty degeneration of the heart. He at once transferred himself to the fair Baltimorean, who, as admittedly the best seat in the whole American field, and whose racy speech no groom's could surpass in horsiness, met him more than halfway—and great in consequence was the searching of heart of Diana, for in the privacy of her own soul she realized that she would rather date a letter at "The Paddock" than at the White House itself, and that even if his crest were a currycomb she would prefer it to all the Merrill and Brummell quarterings in creation. And the worst of it was, that Alice Warburton could ride better than she, was the great-niece of a President of the United States—and never quoted, except stable slang! Yes, and ever since that dreadful ride home from Beekman's, March, whom she had met almost nightly at dinners and the little dances, had shown quite an unsuspected side—the side of his really considerable culture—and when he and she were of Mrs. Vanderpoel's box party at "Parsifal," and she heard the way that he analyzed Wagner's genius—for that Alice Warburton's benefit!—poor Diana saw a great light—too late!

At the foot of the steps she now found a groom waiting with the splen-

did English hunter that Mr. Craigie had given her at Christmas, and with the groom riding a few yards back of her, she trotted briskly down the avenue to overtake Mr. Craigie, who, the groom said, had grown impatient and started some minutes since.

Just as she was passing out of the "Pen-Craigie" gates one of "The Paddock" men came cantering along, leading "The Monk," whom Diana had not ridden since Miss Warburton's arrival, for one of the Tod girls had told her that Miss Warburton said it was "devilish bad form, don't you know, to ride one man's horse all the time—spongy!"

"Beg pardon, miss—a note from Mr. March, miss," said the groom, touching his cap as Diana came up to him.

He dismounted and handed her the note, which she tore open with feverish hope that it contained evidence that he had surrendered, and the very clear, if not very logical, determination to be highly indignant if he had done so.

He had written:

DEAR MISS MERRILL: As this is the last meet of the season, and with all due respect to "Rex," I am cherishing the hope that you will ride "The Monk"—in memory of our first meet, you know. I am a bit down—for certain reasons unnecessary to state—so I shall be awfully glad if you will thus remind me of happier days. And, by the way, if the hounds find, as we expect, in the "Deepdene" coverts, don't, for my sake, venture to go straight—which some of the mad ones will no doubt do—but join the field above the bridge, for the two stiff ones in the first meadow are really too bad. I may fly them, for just now breaking my neck seems alluring. Hope you will enjoy the run immensely. Miss Warburton swears she will lark any old deathtrap the hounds may choose to indicate, but then—you know her!

Cordially,

FORDYCE DUANE MARCH.

"The Paddock," Thursday.

Diana crumpled the note spasmodically, and swallowed hard. She wanted to cry; but remembering her resolution—and the presence of the groom—she assumed an air of surprised injury, and said: "Why, really, you know, I can't understand. Say to Mr. March, that I will ride my own horse, *of course*."

"Certainly, miss; thank you," replied the sphinxlike groom, remounting and retreating up the highroad toward "The Paddock."

Scarcely had he gone a dozen yards, when Diana turned her head and was about to call him—a rush of many thoughts surging through her heart; but she again recalled her determination, and surprising "Rex" by a suggestion of the spur, she set to work to feel properly outraged by March's insufferable assurance—and to overtake Mr. Craigie.

She liked that! Be careful for *his* sake! Since when had she given him the right to be so solicitous for her safety? And, too, how dared he rub that odious Miss Warburton's superior courage into her in this way? He evidently wanted to save "The Monk," and had only sent the horse in order to give that woman another chance to say the horrid things she just knew she had been saying about her all the whole time! And the monumental mawkishness of his reference to "our first meet"! Gush—and so like a groom's love letter to a parlormaid! And, too, what right had he, merely a casual acquaintance, to burden her with a confession of his feeling blue, she should like to know?

It must not be inferred from all this that her heart and her head were working in accord as she trotted along the turnpike. Far from it. While her head was arraigning the presumption of the M. F. H. her heart was tingling with the feeling that, after all, the dear fellow had thought of her, and in his own blundering, boyish, pathetic way was trying to win back the ground that he had lost. And how sweet it was of him to remember that first meet! And how like him—the great, masterful, chivalrous knight!—to be forewarning and protecting her—and letting that Miss Warburton break her neck, for all he cared!

If these thoughts and these feelings would seem to be incompatible, the explanation for the apparent contradiction must be sought in those impenetrable recesses of feminine psychology from

which the mere man is excluded by the limitations of his altogether too mathematical and matter-of-fact mind. Enough for us to record the facts. Diana stuck March's little note into her bodice close to her heart—and resolutely set her face into the expression of lofty displeasure which her head decided was proper to the occasion. And in a few minutes she overtook Mr. Craigie, and they pounded along together toward the meet, at the corner of "Glen Stuart."

Of course there was a great turnout for this last meet. Every riding man in the county was on hand, no less than some dozen or more visitors, and, of course, Mrs. Dudley-West and the other women who never missed a ride to hounds. As Mr. Craigie, looking the gay old boy he was, damme! and Diana arrived, March was in executive session with the major, Lord Bertie, the head huntsman, and Wexford—the imported English whip whose intuitive way of locating a fox was little short of miraculous, and whose profile resembled that of a codfish. At a little distance Vanderpoel and Fortescue and the other dare-devils were shortening stirrup straps and otherwise preparing to court death, for the welcome tip had been disseminated by a knowing whip that the "Deepdene" coverts were to be drawn and, of course, that meant that the three man-killers in the adjoining meadow were available for all who were weary of life. In the midst of these, and holding regal court, was Miss Warburton, looking even more than usually fit in a dark green habit and stiff felt hat wound about by a cherry-colored veil.

Mr. Craigie, always effervescent, was unusually poppy, and it was his cackling gallantries as he rode in and out among the traps and mounts, making pretty little speeches to the pretty women, that first attracted the much-engrossed M. F. H. to Diana. He came hurrying over to her when he spied her, and it required all of Di's resolution to play the rôle she had set herself—March did look so eager and anxious!

"Why, Miss Merrill," he began, "I sent 'The Monk' over—must have got there after you left—thought you might like to—"

"My own horse is perfectly satisfactory, thank you," replied Miss Merrill, frigidly.

An awkward moment followed. March was not usually at a loss, but this was a bit too much; so he raised his hat and made "Mephisto" wheel in that famous way of his, and said: "Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm sure."

Diana's heart instantly rebelled against her head, but before she could undo the mischief, Miss Warburton called out—she *was* so loud always!—"I say, Mr. March, won't you come and tighten my girth and shorten up my stirrup a bit, for the boys tell me we are at last going to have a chance to take those run ones in the meadow?"

"Delighted!" shouted March back to her, and trotted off to the horrid creature, and Diana could see that in the flirty dialogue that ensued the two were arranging to hunt together.

Finally the start was made, and the hunt in high spirits began to move along the side road in the direction of "Deepdene." But it was not March's lucky day, for not even Wexford, the weasel, could nose out a fox in the "Deepdene" coverts. March was crushed. To draw a blank is always the chief sorrow of an M. F. H., but this disappointment came with especial poignancy, because Lord Arthur—of course inspired by Lord Bertie—had publicly predicted it.

"Oh, I say, old chap, buck up!" shouted Lord Bertie, when March came out of the copse very red and touchy. "Draws will go wrong in the best regulated hunts, you know."

March thanked him with a sickly smile, and the rather dispirited procession moved on toward the Dingle bottom, not, however, without incident, for Miss Warburton, in spite of March's emphatic protest, called out: "Volunteers! I'm going to lark the meadow, anyway! Yoick! tallyho!"

She flew the road fence into the meadow, followed by the whole kinder-

garten and Mr. Craigie—second childhood has many points of resemblance to the first—and away they went, safely enough, too, over the triple menace of the meadow barriers, rejoining the main body up the road.

The second draw proved a triumph, for two foxes were unearthed, and March, whose speed up-grade in the matter of feelings was quite as rapid as on the down-grade, sent his soul through his bugle—and the game, a mad one and a hot, was on in an instant.

Through the narrow funnel of the Dingle bottom scurried the foxes, with the hounds and the whole field killingly close at their heels, and, barring accidents, the M. F. H. knew that he could count on a kill—perhaps two!—at the upper end of the fan-shaped stretch bordered by the river and the Cobble Hill cliffs.

But the accidents came fast enough. When a man is in luck he is, and when he's not he's not, and that is all there is to it. And March was not. First of all, the best fox got away somehow among the rocks just this side of the fir—a nasty spot full of prickly brier, too much for the hounds, and broken stone, too much for the horses—and the remaining one, instead of doing the proper thing, made off up the stiff downs, as if aware that rough stubble in heavy loam up an incline made deucedly slow going, and that, once across the open two miles, and through the hopeless tangle of the neck of woods, safety lay waiting in the boggy flats beyond. Recent rains and the rapidly thawing ground made this strategy a success, for the horses floundered heavily up the steep stubble field, and by the time that the inevitable detour of half a mile around the woods had been accomplished at the top, the hounds were in a state of mind as to the scent.

Sniffing and yelping, the thwarted beasts crossed and recrossed the tableland, and March stood at seven-eights and no buyers. And Lord Bertie said nothing, but smiled. Meanwhile Diana was as miserable as an heiress aged

twenty-five, in perfect health, can very well be, but whenever March happened to be near her, she added what she could to his cup of woe by making sundry caustic remarks about "all this red tape may be very English, but it's not the way we ride in Kentucky"—which was not a bit nice of her.

Finally, however, a wise old hound—the sire whose blood gave to the Norbury kennels their chief title to fame—after long deliberation, with his nose rubbing along the edge of the field and his tail in an attitude of intense thought, picked up the lost scent, and the next moment every puppy in the pack was as jubilant as if he had done the trick himself—and the halloo got the field in motion in a trice.

This time the trail led off into one of the best stretches of hunting country in Queen Anne County, and unless the old hound's powers were beyond belief, the fox could not be halfway across the splendid three-mile sweep of turf, over which the pack now was making in full cry. In the van rode March, at Miss Warburton's bridle, he making up by exuberant chatter for the gone feeling that for some reason filled his heart with an aching void; and she, elated by his very pointed attentions, which she accepted as made in good faith, and meeting them with her own best efforts, which she knew were not so made. And trailing along listlessly among the tail-enders—Dr. Brathwaite and the Tod girls and a lot of sedate gentlemen riding for their stomach's sake and their often infirmities—rode Diana.

When the open country was not half crossed poor March met with that ill wind which brings nobody in the hunting way any good—a crossed scent! Suddenly the pack stopped, and a tremendous sniffing and deliberating took place among the hounds, whose leaders picked up the scent of the second fox lying dead across the trail they had been following. So fast and free had been the glorious going that the field was upon the pack in half a minute, and all came to a halt. The puppies—canine and human—were for taking up the new, but the old stagers seemed dis-

posed to stick to the original, if fainter, scent. It was for the M. F. H. to decide. And March showed by his nervousness and the way he kept looking this way and then that, that he realized the gravity of the situation. The major was at his side in a moment, whispering counsels of perfection, but Lord Bertie, with his leg thrown over the pommel and his face devoid of expression one way or the other, sat by in an attitude of rather bored interest that fairly made March wild. It was a critical moment for the reputation of Fordyce March, M. F. H. Vanderpoel, of course, was prepared to show any number of reasons why the new scent should be taken up, and Miss Warburton, who knew that this course led down through the roughest bit of country imaginable, was also loud in her arguments in its favor. It was a bleak, chilly day, but March mopped the sweat from his brow, and, as usual when in a corner, he remained forbiddingly silent, ignoring the gratuitous advice of the babes and sucklings, and characteristically refraining from seeking that of the wise and prudent.

At last "Macbeth," the great hound, made up his mind, and gave deep-lunged indication of his desire to continue the original trail; but by this time the puppies of both species were at the point of open rebellion, and in the second's hesitation of the M. F. H. they saw their opportunity and made off pellmell after the fox that lured to danger.

Then March acted. Ordering the hunt to proceed along the first course, the whips managed to get all of the older hounds together under "Macbeth's" leadership, and March, on looking about him, found that the major, Lord Bertie, the real out-and-outers of Norbury and elsewhere—and Diana!—stood by him. The rest were already in full cry down the sloping downs, and March looked after them with superb contempt for an instant, and then sounded the advance along the lines of orthodoxy and the fit!

It was all done in half a dozen seconds, but it was a fine bit of general-



ship, a dramatic picture of nerve, good judgment and stubborn pride.

"Bravo, old chap!" shouted Lord Bertie, breaking the cruel silence with which he had waited to see what the youngster would do. "Sir Porter Dabney himself could not have done better! I tell you, my dear boy, there's only one thing to do in hunting—and that is to hunt!"

This time March shot a look of rapture and gratitude at the noble critic, for he knew that his approbation was genuine; and off they went like mad—all that was left of them, noble conservatives, and Diana!

The run was a hard and a long one, for the fox had by this time a discouraging lead, but "Macbeth" seemed to feel that his own reputation, as well as that of the gallant young master, was at stake, and with every bound it was evident that the trustworthiness of the old brute was being more and more vindicated, since whatever doubt the pack may have entertained at first had vanished, and they were forging ahead in a way that showed that they were bearing down on the prey with the swiftness and sureness of doom.

Diana, too, was a changed being. During March's moment of torturing uncertainty she saw it all! She loved him! She would have thrown her arms about him. She would have cried to him not to waver; not to mind the cool indifference of Lord Bertie or the crass callowness of the infants or the vulgar bravado of that shallow Miss Warburton; not to be led off by the new, but to hold to the old, to win to the best—by the strength of his own great self!

On went they so, past the terraced slopes of the Morgan hill, past the open stretches of "Cortlandt Chase," past the roughish country beyond the cedars, taking fences and ditches, and riding straight, for the master of Norbury just must win!

They killed in the pocket of Ludlow's woods—you know, where they killed on the day that Peabody rode three miles without bridle or bit—and Diana, of course, secured the brush.

And then in triumph and rather tired

—it's a good day's work, is a run like that—they started back, and March, after thrashing the whole thing out with the stout old major and some of his ilk, dropped behind where Lord Bertie rode with—*her!*

"It was awfully good of you to back me up, you know," began March, when Lord Bertie proved himself a good fellow by riding forward to the others, leaving them alone.

"I do try to ride rationally," replied Diana, rather disconcertingly.

"Quite so, and I wish I could tell you how glad I was to find that you thought my decision rational," he answered.

"Miss Warburton seems to have thought differently," went on Diana, stiffly, but feeling that she was going fast.

March wanted to say "Damn Miss Warburton!" but he said: "Yes, Miss Warburton and I differ apparently on a number of things."

"Not really? What, for example?"

"You—among other subjects," he replied, eagerly.

"You might have been better employed than in discussing me," she returned, feeling that she was not going so fast, after all.

"Oh, come, I say, you know," he replied, and then added, abruptly, as if carried away by long pent-up feeling: "Won't you tell me what I've done, Miss Merrill? Your manner, you know, for some time; and, then, the way you threw me down about 'The Monk,' you know; yes, and—oh, everything, you know."

"Really, I haven't the least idea of what you are talking about," she answered, going again.

"Oh, yes, you have, too. Ever since that confounded Miss Warburton came, you have—"

"I prefer not to discuss Miss Warburton."

"Oh, I'm not going to, you know. I only wanted to know why you have changed so. Surely, after to-day, you can't think that I am the sort that follows any new—"

He stopped short. He felt that he

was mixing his metaphors again. It would never do to speak of her as a "scent"!

"Say it—say it! You were about to say that you don't pick up a new scent—ugh!" she said, with a laugh *frappée* that sent a chill through him.

"Really, now, don't be so hard on me. I'm a hunting man, you know, and not a poet. I was trying to tell you that I am—oh, hang it, you know what I was going to say!"

This time she laughed—a good, warm, kindly laugh. He *was* so genuine, so straightforward, so—so—so—oh, how she loved him, just as he was!

"Mr. March," she began, in the dear old free way that he had so much longed for lately, "after to-day, as you say, I *do* know you better than I did before. It was fine, brave, noble—the way you kept your head and scorned their jeers and won your point—yes, and the way you chose to hold to the old—scent, if you will! And I like you for it—oh, *ever* so much! But now I'm going to tell you just why we aren't friends any more. It's the horses! A man of your intellect and breeding ought to aspire to something above a groom's level—

no, don't interrupt me!—and if you ever ask another woman to be your wife, and she refuses you as I did, because I *do* aspire to something higher than the stable, and could never marry a man who wastes his life as you do, why, then, don't imagine that you are getting even with her by taking up with the first scent that crosses your path—I can use the word in connection with Miss Warburton—for by doing that you only make a true woman all the more thankful that she refused you."

During this long sermon March rode along with bowed head and many diverse thoughts. When she ceased, he suddenly stopped his horse and laid his hand on her bridle.

"Miss Merrill—Diana—I've been a fool—an idiot—a—a—a—"

"Yes. Go on!"

"Why, hang it all, I'll sell every horse I've got—to-morrow!"

"Oh, don't sell 'The Monk' and 'Mephisto,' *please*, will you—or we might forget our first meet!"

"Do you mean it?" he cried—and when he leaned over and drew her head within his arm she blushed, but demurred not.



## THE MEETING

I OFTEN ponder how, when first we met,  
We did not speak as strangers. To her eyes  
Methought there leaped a lustre of surprise  
As leaps the smouldering flame that storm-winds fret.  
Vanished the years;—I saw an island set  
In sapphire seas and under sapphire skies,  
Where wandered two in most ecstatic wise,  
Meshed by the love-god in his golden net.

In ages dead—thus said the portraiture  
Of dream—you won her, trembled to her kiss;  
Ah, would I might divine, through omen sure,  
That there again would dawn an hour like this,  
Then would all other joys fade, pale and poor,  
And no bar be unto the bourn of bliss!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

# Little Bo-Peep of Washington Square

By Walter Prichard Eaton

**H**IE decided that, on the whole, it was spring and time to go out in the park and sit on a bench. During the winter just passed he had walked out under the arch almost every day and smiled a greeting to the cheerful, sunny row of houses along the north side of Washington Square, telling them confidentially that, if it takes three generations to make a gentleman, it takes three generations more to make a gentleman's house. From his high-perched windows he had seen sunset after sunset flame in orange and smoky gold behind the western housetops and the purple Jersey shore, throwing the church tower into black relief, while the arc lamps flared out in the bare branches of the elms below, and the throngs of home-going toilers passed shivering between the banks of snow. Many a night, too, he had thrown open his window to the clear, cold darkness and taken a deep breath before retiring, to reassure himself that the goodly open space still existed. But he had waited for spring before sitting in the park itself, on a bench.

And now it was April. The grass plots, he suddenly noticed, glancing out, were unmistakably green, the sun was bright, the air that came through the open window warm and a bit languid. Far off somewhere a hurdy-gurdy was playing a waltz. He listened a moment, smiled, laid aside his pen and paper, pushed the music scores on his desk into a heap, took his hat, and went out into the square. When he reached the statue of Garibaldi he saw that the

workmen were clearing out the basin of the fountain, while a crowd of children looked on. The water would soon be spouting and the birds cooling themselves in the spray. Just beyond the fountain was a clear bit of roadway, protected at either end from traffic by a row of posts, and beyond this, tempting benches. He crossed to one of them and sat down.

The morning sun struck down warmly on his cheek, and he scarcely heard the rumble of traffic and the shouts of the children about him, wrapped in the dreamy content of the first sun bath of the season. The worry and mental strain of the work he had just left slipped from his consciousness; the din and haste of the newspaper office which claimed a large share of his services when operas and concerts were performed, the artificial excitement and atmosphere of these performances themselves, were forgotten, or seemed, at best, pleasantly far off and apart from the hour. He put up his hand to his neck and felt it warm under the sun. He relaxed his limbs contentedly and closed his eyes. The way of his life seemed further off than ever then. It was as if reviving currents of health and quiet were pouring in upon him. Why could it not be always so? He snuggled down into the corner of the bench and exclaimed, aloud:

"Make me over, Mother April!"

A hastily smothered chuckle from the bench next to his made him start and turn. No one was sitting there but a girl—she might have been twenty-five, small and curiously pretty—who was looking intently at the ground. But there was a telltale color in her cheek.

He continued to look at her sharply, and she grew still more conscious, and, suddenly looking up, met his gaze.

"I beg your pardon," she stammered.

"Not at all," said he, bowing. "I pray you will finish your laugh out."

"I—I don't want to laugh any more," said the girl.

"I beg *your* pardon now," said he, "but you do."

"Yes, you're right," said she, and laughed merrily.

"That's better," said he. "And now won't you tell me why you laughed?"

"At you," she said.

"I'm aware of that," he answered; "but why?"

"Because you quoted out loud with such heartfelt appeal—just what I was quoting inwardly," said she, "and it struck me how funny it would be if I should finish the poem for you and surprise you. That made me laugh. Now I must go."

"Wait," he cried. "Please do finish it for me."

She rose and smiled at him, shaking her head. "No," she said.

"Make *her* over, Mother April," he pleaded, looking with mock despair at the sky.

The girl smiled again, looked quickly around her, met his eye for an instant, and chanted solemnly, but with a laugh behind her eyes:

"Make me anything but neuter  
When the sap begins to stir."

Then she was gone.

"Amen," he called after her, but if she heard him she did not give a sign, and he saw her soon join a band of ragged, dirty children, twenty or thirty in number, who were playing in a well-ordered flock, under the care of another young woman. She at once took a hand in their supervision, and did not so much as look in his direction again. Toward twelve o'clock, apparently at her orders, the children all gathered in line, two by two, and started on a southward march. The particular object of his gaze marched at their head, her hand holding fast the hand of a fat little chap who stood scarce knee high. He no-

ticed that her hair was golden in the sun and abundant as a harvest, and that she walked with the step of a woman who loves walking. Further than that he had no chance to observe, for the little procession, after many delays and exhortations from the two leaders, managed to get safely across Fourth Street and disappeared into the town to the south.

"They came from some kindergarten," he said to himself, "and not far away, or they wouldn't have stayed till so near noon. They'll come again."

And with this last reflection he rose and walked briskly to lunch.

The next day at eleven he again laid down his work and trained his glasses on the square; but no kindergarten was visible. The second day and the third were likewise barren, but on the fourth morning, which was once more warm and inviting, he saw the little procession threading its way across Fourth Street, and, best of all, but one teacher in charge; and she had yellow hair. He grabbed his hat and ran out into the street.

But this time he did go into the square by the statue and the fountain. Walking northward, he skirted the further sidewalk of Waverly Place to the far corner of the square, and then walked in cautiously, screened by the bushes and the numerous perambulators, until he spied his little teacher—he knew her by her mass of golden coils—sitting back to him on the same bench which she had occupied before. The bit of fenced-off asphalt was a safe, clean playground for her little charges, and they were sporting merrily in front of her. He came up quietly quite close, and said suddenly:

"Well, how is the other half of the quotation this morning?"

The girl started with a little cry. "How you startled me!" she said, as he came around and sat down on the next bench.

"I beg your pardon; I didn't mean to startle you—quite so much," said he.

"I had hoped you had forgiven my—my rudeness the other day," she said with much dignity, not looking at him.

"There was nothing to forgive," said he.

"Excuse me, there was a great deal to forgive," she replied, with even more dignity, still not looking at him.

"Then I forgive it," he answered, quizzically.

The girl flushed, and made no reply. But he was too wise to allow a pause.

"Please," he said, "forgive me. I know you never expected to see me again, but we are both of Mother April's brood, you know, and under one wing. She is kind, if you are not, and clucked to me this morning that you were coming, so what could I do but come, too? We are all sheep, and under one shepherd, who is Bo——"

"You're not mending matters," said the girl; "and you're mixing metaphors horribly."

"Better mix a metaphor than lose a friend," he answered. "I've been grinding away over there in my rooms—for I live on the square, you know, and you can never come here without my seeing you, I'll be fair and warn you—all the morning on a stupid old article about Mozart, who is so unfortunately great that everybody has to write about him. I'm sure I didn't mix my metaphors once; but I chucked the work when I saw you leading your flock into the square, and came forth ready to disgrace myself cheerfully for the sake of a chat with a kindred April spirit a little more contemporary than Mozart."

"Mozart was an April spirit," said the girl, with sudden enthusiasm; "even his andantes are but April showers!"

"May I incorporate that in my article?" he asked, smiling. The girl glanced at him quickly, but there was no banter in his tone, and an evident hearty delight in her own appreciation was plain in his face.

"Certainly," she answered, laughing, and coloring a little with pleasure. Then she bit her lip with vexation at her breakdown, and looked coldly out on the square again.

But he evidently felt there was safety in silence now, and, as the girl turned to call one or two of her children back who had wandered too far from the

spot, he regarded her face intently. It was too white, as if she were tired and winter worn, but even more piquant in profile than he had guessed, none the less, for the nose had the faintest tendency to elevate itself as asserting independence, and the mouth could be either a rosebud or a most determined organ of command. And she had, he was quite sure, the most glorious mass of hair he had ever seen. His admiration made him forgetful, and presently she flushed under his gaze and looked at him questioningly. The admiration he felt he was not able to conceal; their eyes met for a moment without disguise. Then they turned away simultaneously and neither spoke.

Again he knew that silence was dangerous, but this time he had no desire to avert the danger. To feel in this speechless pause that more than words were passing between him and the girl at his side was a tingling joy, though every instant he grew less sure that his next sentence would be within the bounds of temperate utterance. He knew, as one intuitively does know such things, that this little teacher had come with April to upset him, and he was deliciously glad of it. But the children did not allow the silence to last. Suddenly two of them fell to quarreling, a girl and a boy. The girl slapped the boy slowly and deliberately in the face, and the injured babe began to cry.

The teacher was alert in his companion like a flash.

"Sadie Lemongeli, come here," she said, severely.

"Sadie *what*?" he asked, in astonishment. But the teacher did not hear him. She took the little girl between her knees and looked her in the eyes reproachfully. Then she told her to beg "Willie's" pardon. Willie in turn was exhorted to "be a little soldier" and not cry. And so peace was once more established, so skillfully and surely, that he admired more than ever.

"Would you mind explaining that jelly matter?" he asked, when the children were playing quietly again.

"Oh," said the girl, "everybody

laughs at Sadie's name. It is just like lemon jelly, only it is spelled differently, and is a single word. And I assure you, she is about as hard to make good."

Then she straightened up and began buttoning her jacket. The tension of his mood had been broken and he watched her calmly. She, too, looked at him, smiling. "I've got to tell the children to say good-by to you," she said. "And it won't look well if I don't give you a name."

"Lowell," he said.

"I thought so," she continued, "when you spoke of Mozart. You see, I knew your favorites."

"I should be either less or much more than human if your implied acquaintance with what I have written didn't please and flatter me," he said. "But surely you won't keep so much of the advantage on your side, Miss——"

"Abbott," she said, rising and holding out her hand quite frankly.

"I thank Mother April for this kindness," he said, as he took it.

"Come, children, take your places," she called. "Willie, you and Sadie lead the line, and see if you can be good little friends all the way back to school. Now say good-by to Mr. Lowell before we march."

"Good-by," the children shrilled in chorus.

"Good-by," he answered, waving his hand to them. He watched them as they marched southward, and at the edge of the park the teacher turned, and he waved his hand again. There was a flicker of a white handkerchief, and then they crossed out of sight. He went back to his room and played the E flat symphony, but omitting the andante.

"We won't have even an April shower to-day," he said aloud, smiling as his finger strayed into the opening bars of the lovely finale.

But there were April showers in plenty during the next week, alternating with raw, windy days, when hats flew suddenly off in turning a corner of the square, and the faint green veil that was vaguely discernible spread

over the elm tree branches made no progress toward foliage. The little teacher did not appear again, and he began to wonder forlornly if she had been but an early sign of spring for him, like the crocuses that vanished before the real spring set in and would not come again. To be sure, he knew her name, and with that knowledge it would be a simple matter to learn in what school she taught, especially if it were a public school. But any such direct forcing of his acquaintance upon her as that was out of the question, so he waited for the return of the fine weather and kept an eye on the square. The fine weather came, the article on Mozart was finished and printed, with the teacher's phrase lovingly adapted, and other work begun, but still she did not appear; and he had reluctantly given up hope that his chance acquaintance would ever be renewed, when, one morning, he spied the cavalcade defiling to their chosen position. Each child carried, dangling from a string, some colored object which he could not tell the nature of, and they seemed particularly lively. He at once went out and made the detour around the square, scouting long enough to see that the children had small and clumsily made kites, which could not possibly fly, even in a much stronger breeze than was blowing, but which seemed to give them infinite satisfaction none the less.

One of them had broken his kite, and the teacher was bending over trying to repair it as he came up.

"Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep  
And doesn't know where to find them,  
But leave them alone and they'll come home,  
Flying their kites behind them,"

he chanted, laughing.

The girl did not start this time, but turned, smiling.

"Little Bo Peep has done nothing of the kind," she said. "Not a sheep is lost."

The children had listened attentively to this unexpected variation of a familiar rhyme, with something between wonder at his presence and interest in his words. They were still staring at him.



"Say good-morning to Mr. Lowell," the teacher commanded.

The children obeyed, and quickly turned to their own play as he sat down on the next bench and added, as if there had been no interruption: "Of course not, no sane sheep would get lost under certain conditions of sheepherding."

Her cheeks alone replied to this, and she bent anew over the broken kite.

"May I help you?" he asked. "I'm not a kindergarten teacher, but I think I've probably made more really, truly kites than you have."

"I wish you would!" she exclaimed.

He sat on the bench beside her and took the kite from her hands. With a knife he cut holes through the cover, to the dismay of the little black-eyed Hebrew to whom it belonged, and readjusted the string. Then he bound up the frame into some sort of stiffness, took an old letter from his pocket and twisted it into bits, which were added to the tail, and before the little Jew's astonished eyes he tossed it up into the air, where a breeze caught it and held it taut at the extreme length of the cord, some six or eight feet aloft. The owner shouted to his little companions, and from that moment "Mr. Lowell" was no longer a stranger, but a friend and benefactor. The teacher clapped her hands.

"Fine!" she cried. "But, you poor man, you'll have no rest now."

And she laughed merrily as one by one at first, then pressing in a crowd, the children brought their clumsy kites to his lap and clamored for him to fix them "like Louis'." He fixed as many as could be fixed, and the children ran, screaming, away, trailing the kites now up in the air, now dragging on the ground, behind them.

"I guess it's as good as a normal school training to have been a boy in New England," he laughed.

"Sometimes, I guess," said the teacher. "But why New England? Don't boys fly kites in other parts of the country?"

"Oh, I suppose so," he replied. "But I didn't happen to be a boy in any other part of the country."

"Do you know," she said, "I was never in New England; that is, not further in than Danbury, Connecticut, in my life?"

"You poor girl!" he said, with such comical sincerity that she laughed. "You shall go there this summer, and complete your education."

"I should like to," she answered, "but I've no one to go with."

"Oh, yes, you have," said he. "My mother is already planning to invite you in July."

"What's that?" she said, quickly, turning on him.

"Yes, she is," he answered, calmly, "although she doesn't know it yet. You see, by July, you and I are going to be very good friends, I hope, and if I don't keep the house full of my friends in the summer, mother thinks the vacation wasted."

"Where is your home?" said the girl, smiling in spite of herself at his boyishness.

"Andover!" he said, as if there were no need of further description or encomium.

"Is that near Boston?" she said, innocently. "I've heard of Boston, you know."

"Oh, you New Yorkers," he cried, "you are so provincial! Yes, it is near Boston, but not too near. It's a lovely old town high up on an elm-crowned hill, where there is an academy more than a century old and a theological school that once fashioned the religion of half the population of New England, and great, square wooden houses, and rest, oh, the most blissful rest! from all the noise and turmoil and hurry and coarseness of New York!"

The girl looked at him curiously, as if his words had touched deeply. "You are holding out a bribe to me to become your friend," she said, seriously.

"Please call it an inducement," he answered. "You would think it an inducement if you knew about Andover, I'm sure."

"I know about Andover," she smiled. "But you New Englanders have to be taken down a bit once in a while, you see. I've read 'The Story of a Singular

Life,' if nothing else. And you can never guess how much I'd like to go there. How long have you been in New York?"

"Ten months in the year, for two years," he answered.

"I've been here almost twelve months in the year ever since I was born," she said. There was the hint of a quiver in her voice, and she looked straight in front of her.

Lowell glanced at her quickly. "Tell me about it?" he said.

She did not reply for a moment. Then she said: "Thank you for the honor you did me in your last article—the one on Mozart."

"It is I who should thank you," he answered. "Please tell me about it."

"About what?" she said.

"About the cloud that came over the April sun just now."

The girl smiled. "See, the cloud is gone now," she replied, turning toward him. "Don't let us talk about it."

"Do let us talk about it," he said, eagerly. "You have been in New York all your life. How long have you been teaching?"

"Four years," the girl replied.

"And the school is old and unsanitary, and the kiddies are dirty and hard, sometimes, to manage, and you are very, very tired?" he continued.

"But it's so worth while, working with children like these!" she cried, holding out her hand toward her ragged brood.

"They are dirty, though, and you get very, very tired?" he urged, softly.

The girl's cheeks flushed a little and she looked at the ground in silence. She seemed very small and fragile and pathetically pretty beside him, and, in spite of himself, his voice became almost caressingly tender as he repeated: "Don't you?"

She looked at him an instant unrestrainedly, with eyes large with gratitude. "What—what of it?" she said.

"This of it," he smiled back at her, "that Andover will rest you."

The girl shook her head. "You are a funny man," she said.

He laughed. "You don't really think

so, you only think you ought to think so," said he.

The girl looked at him sharply. "What do you mean by that?" she asked.

"What did you mean by your comment?" he replied.

"I shall not tell you, if you can't guess," she said.

"I did guess," he answered, "and spoke accordingly."

"Perhaps you guessed wrong," said the girl.

"Did I?" he asked.

The girl rose as if to call her children. "I don't think you did," she said.

"So my comment was right, then?"

"That is a different question," she said, buttoning her jacket.

"Please, Bo Peep, before you go, tell me when you will come again," he said.

"Oh, not for two weeks, I'm afraid," she replied.

"Two weeks is a long time," he complained. "It will be May in two weeks, and in two weeks more it will be almost June, and in another two weeks it will be almost vacation time. Only four more chances to prove that I'm not a 'funny man'—it isn't fair!"

"But what can I do about it?" the girl said, smiling.

"You know what you can do about it, Bo Peep," he answered, looking her in the eye. "Shepherdesses dwell in wattled cots somewhere in the valley while the sheep are sleeping in the fold."

"No, Mr. Lowell," she answered, with a touch of stiffness, "I can't do that. Good-morning. Come, children," she added, in a louder tone.

"But in Washington Square—" he began, bluntly.

"Washington Square doesn't count," she interrupted, hastily.

"Pardon me, it is all that counts," said he.

But she did not reply to this, and bidding the children say good-by, she led her flock away.

Little Louis, however, as he passed by, ran to his new-found friend and said, with eyes big and eager: "Why don't you come down to our school?"

The teacher stopped and looked back.

"Where is it?" said he.

"Oh, just down there on Bleecker Street," said Louis, pointing a dirty finger southward.

"All right," Lowell laughed, patting the midget on the head, "some day soon I'll come." And he glanced at the teacher as he spoke, but she looked away, and started the march again.

But when she reached the school-room and dismissed the class, she stopped Louis as he passed out the door and suddenly hugged him. Lowell, however, went back to his appointments with the step of a boy.

"She *shall* come to Andover this summer!" he cried to himself. "Bless her little Puritan heart, that only dares to be Pagan in Washington Square, she's worth doing my best for!"

And he dressed for a *matinée* performance in a belated spring presentation of the Wagnerian "Ring" trilogy, whistling the Witches' March from the Leonore symphony of Raff. To him Wagner was long-winded, uninspired, tiresome, and his critical sin in saying so was only pardoned by many of his readers on the ground of his "extreme youth"; others did not forgive him at all, only consenting to read his reviews because he had a trick of expressing his ideas and impressions in language free from the cant phrases of criticism and filled with sly turns of humor and felicitous imagery. As he sat in the darkened opera house that afternoon while *Siegfried* and *Mime* chattered together and nothing that seemed to him worth while or genuine took place, his thoughts were all of his little school-teacher. He wondered where she lived and who she was. He tried to picture her home, where she doubtless lived alone with a widowed mother. This seemed rather like a conventional drama of the Robertson period, but he felt sure it must be so. He pitied her for the necessity of her hard, trying toil. He saw her again in the fresh, bright sunlight of the square, with her eyes looking hungrily into his at the mention of green Andover on the hill, till his voice had grown caressing and she had not re-

sented it. He glanced at the empty seat beside him, for he had not invited anyone to the opera that day, and suddenly thought how pleasant it would be if she were occupying it. A phantom procession of his guests at opera and concerts that winter filed by, and he could not recall one of them who had expressed so fresh, so genuine an appreciation as hers of Mozart, one with whom it had been possible to exchange a quick, understanding glance of enthusiasm, of emotional excitement, of joy in the serenity of tone, as he knew it would be with her. He called to mind the image of her, her piquant little nose, her glorious hair, her dainty charm and winsome, if wholly womanly, appeal, and the laughter that was in her, too. And he grew restless with wishing that she were beside him now, restless and lonely. *Siegfried* had awakened *Brunhilde* in the fashion dear to the story books, and she had given him her belated attention in a duet before Lowell realized that he did not have the ghost of a notion whether the opera had been well done or not.

He waylaid the dean of the music critics after the performance and inquired.

"Weren't you there?" the dean asked him, in his high-pitched voice, which contrasted oddly with his huge bulk.

"Only part of me," said Lowell.

The dean laughed. He was good-natured, if he did love Wagner and worry because Lowell did not. "Young April, young April!" he cried, laying his great hand on the young man's shoulder. "Come over to Brown's and I'll tell you all about it."

And that afternoon was the beginning for Lowell of a daily comradeship in thought with the little teacher. He knew that his own record and the proud standing of his family, which boasted generations of notable men and women, could not fail to be matters of knowledge to her, and that was sufficient. He took a certain joy in his confidence in her, even refraining from the simple operation of looking up her address in the school directory, which could hardly have been branded a piece of common-

place detective work. The very number of his social and musical acquaintances made the possibility of his hitting upon a mutual friend, certainly without her aid, hopelessly remote, and he waited with what patience he could for her return to the square, and grew to desire it more each day that slipped by and did not bring her.

One morning she came. His heart gave a jump as he saw the procession of little figures follow her into the space beyond the fountain, and he went out with that curious excitement and tenseness of nerves one experiences before facing an emotional adventure. He had thought of her so often in the past days, so intimately, even, that he was conscious of a danger in her real presence, for, after all, he had talked with her but three brief times.

She smiled brightly as she saw him approach, and made way for him on the bench beside her.

"You said in two weeks," he began, reproachfully.

"Why, it's only been one," she replied. "It's not the first of May till to-morrow."

"No, it has been three," he maintained, stoutly. "For three weeks the square has been Bo Peep-less."

"That's not kind of you," she said, "when I made a special plea with the principal to get out to-day."

"Did you, really?" he inquired, in an altered tone.

"Yes," said she, "the children looked so longingly out of the windows."

He glanced at her quickly, but she was engaged in watching the children. "And didn't you look longingly out of the windows, too?" he inquired.

"No," she laughed at him. "It wouldn't do. I'm sure the real Bo Peep let her mind wander and that's why her sheep did."

"I'm glad you've so much will," he said. "I confess I've looked longingly out of my windows every day of late, though I haven't seen what I wanted."

"And such fine weather, too," said the girl.

"But such a barren pasture," said he.

"Do you play the piano?" she in-

quired, breaking the silence which had followed his last remark.

"I shouldn't like to write an auto-criticism," he laughed, "but I manage to amuse myself without a mechanical player. Why?"

"Because, the other afternoon, when I was walking by your house, I heard somebody playing a song and I stopped to listen, it was so jolly. The sound came from 'way upstairs, but a window was open, and I could make out the air. I wondered if you were the player."

"How did the air go?"

She puckered up her small lips and whistled a bar or two. He looked at the rosebud the two lips made.

"Stop!" he said.

The girl did stop, abruptly, and looked at him a little offended. "That was the tune," she said.

"I know it was," he replied, at a loss how to explain himself, "but you mustn't whistle any more."

The girl looked puzzled. "Well, what was the name of the tune?" she asked.

"A song from 'The Fool's Preference,'" he answered, "by Purcell. 'I'll sail upon the dog star,' the words begin." And he half sang, half hummed the dashing, irresistible melody.

"I'll judge for 'all the nations'!" She clapped her hands. "He *was* a 'roaring boy.' My, I'd like to be such a roaring boy myself!"

"Little Pagan," he said.

"That's not Pagan, it's Elizabethan," she corrected.

"Same thing," said he.

"I don't agree with you at all," the girl retorted, her eyes snapping up for a contest.

He leaned back on the bench and smiled. "We are getting to be very good friends," he said.

"Are we?" she queried.

"Yes," he answered. "Only good friends can afford to differ entirely. Now, I am a Unitarian—"

"Oh, then you are a Pagan, too," she cut in, laughing.

"I see you are an Anglican—outside of Washington Square," he said. "But, to continue, although I am a Unitarian

I still have standing in Andover, because the good folk there are my very dear friends. They can't quite reconcile theology and friendship, even in stern old Andover. And speaking of Andover reminds me——"

The girl looked at him quickly. "You are as funny as ever," she said.

"Do you really think so?" he asked, soberly.

"Really," she answered.

"Why?" he inquired.

"You know very well why," said she.

"No, honestly," he said, "I do not."

The girl laughed. "Your mother might not want me to come," she said, looking up at him under the corner of her lashes.

"Bo Peep," he said, "you are ridiculous. Try again."

She grew more grave. "My mother might not want me to go."

"You and your mother live alone?" he asked, his tone responding to hers.

"My aunt lives with us."

"Near here?"

"On Grove Street," she said. "We have always lived there. Ours was grandfather's house, in the days when the street merited its name."

"You haven't told them, your mother and your aunt, about me?"

"No," said the girl, shaking her head emphatically.

"They don't know you are a Pagan?" he pursued.

"They have never so much as guessed it," she smiled.

"Dear ladies!" said he. "So I can't even send them my love?"

"No," she said.

"If I gave it to you to deliver, you would have to keep it?" he continued.

"I could give it to Louis, or Sadie Lemongeli," she answered, hastily.

"But that would be a false delivery," he said. "I should like to know your mother. I should like to come and play to you there. I should like to have you all come over to see my books and pictures——"

"Please don't!" said the girl.

"You would like to come, then!" he cried, eagerly.

"I should like nothing better in the

world," she said. "No—no one else I know ever plays Purcell." She finished weakly, and she knew he knew it, and blushed.

"Dear little Pagan!" he said again.

Her blush deepened in the silence.

"But you wouldn't take me to your mother, with an explanation?" he queried, veiling the bluntness of his question in the soft eagerness of its tone.

"Not for anything on earth!" she cried, rising. "You shouldn't expect it."

"I didn't expect it, Bo Peep," he said. "I knew you wouldn't. But some day you shall hear Purcell, none the less."

"Will you bring a piano out in the square?" she asked.

"Who knows?"

She called the children together to go back to school.

"Good-by for another week," she said.

"Not for another week," he answered.

"You walk through the square after school, you know."

"Not always," she said.

"But you will some afternoon soon?"

"Day after to-morrow at three," said she, turning to lead the little procession. "Perhaps," she added, as an afterthought.

"Perhaps I'll be here, too," he laughed, as he patted Louis on the head.

The appointed day was prodigally pleasant, and he went out into the May air long before the hour of her coming, and wandered impatiently about the streets, wishing he were going to meet her in the green country somewhere, far from crowds and dust and turmoil. He fancied how elastic her step would become on pasture turf under the open, how the color would return to her cheeks and the signs of fatigue vanish.

He fancied still more the joy of her sole presence in a world all fair about them, the joy of forgetfulness and sweet compliance to the hour. Washington Square seemed suddenly no better than any other spot in the great, stupid, crushing town that was all impossibly unidyllic, unloverlike. A mood that he had not known even during mo-

ments of the most lovely music, since in his college days he had wandered lone as the Scholar Gypsy over the heights behind Arlington, swept over him, the mood of passionate discontent with everything but the dream life and the dream way, of passionate desire for the fair and lovely ideal that the soul knows in its livelier hours. But this mood now held something more definite than of old, brought less of a vague and nameless pain, more of a tingling joy. Before he had scarce known what he wanted, now he knew he wanted her. He knew that the little teacher with the harvest hair, who would soon come walking up out of the south, bore, as it were, in the hollow of her hands, the water that could turn the world to gold. He waited her coming while the tides of the city swam unheeded about him, and his heart sang at its pumping, sang with joy because he had shaken free from the dull stream of everyday consciousness and was once more taken up on the heights of an emotion.

Then she came. She came forth from the dingy block below the square with something of the light of May in her golden tresses, her rosebud lips a-smile, her dainty person bearing itself eagerly toward the open space. He greeted her without a word, and she answered, as he had spoken, only with her eyes.

"I hoped you would come," he said a moment later.

"You knew I would come," she corrected, with a smile.

"You wouldn't have me say so?" he queried.

"I knew *you* would be here," she answered, with a sideways peep at his face.

"I suppose I do look too happy to give probability to a statement that I had my doubts!" he laughed. "Let's try our bench without the lambs to bother us."

"They're no bother," said she.

"They take you away too soon, always," he retorted, leading her to the familiar bench. "Permit me to say they are a nuisance."

The girl seated herself with a contented little laugh. "It is a relief to be

free of them at day's end, I will admit," she said. "Oh, if you could only play me Purcell now, while I sat back and watched the fountain spout in the sun, and had just nothing to do but laugh and listen! Have you played any Purcell since that day?"

"Every morning," he answered, "I play, 'I attempt from love's sickness to fly.'"

"Why that one?" she inquired.

"For the illogical reason that I never make the attempt myself," he answered.

"It is foolish," said the girl, looking out across the square.

"It is very foolish," said he, looking at the girl.

"Almost as foolish as trying to fly from love's health," she added, still looking across the square.

"No, not nearly so foolish, but even more vain," he said, still looking at her.

"Poor man!" she said, suddenly looking at him, her face gravely sympathetic, but deep in her eyes the lurking merriment which he had seen there at their first meeting. "You're not in love, are you?"

"Yes," he said, quite as gravely, but his own eyes answering hers, "I'm afraid I am very much in love."

The girl looked away again quickly. "I like 'Come unto these yellow sands' better," she said.

He glanced up to the windows of his apartment, where his Japanese curtains were swaying out over the stone balcony high above the square. "Up behind those curtains is a room all filled with sifted sunlight and manuscripts and books and a faint odor of good pipe smoke; and there is a piano in it, and the scores of all Purcell's published works," he said, slowly, as if talking to himself.

"And over behind us, in a little brick house on Grove Street, are two dear ladies who know nothing about it," said the girl, in the same manner.

"Still, it would be very pleasant, so very pleasant," he continued, deliberately tantalizing himself with the idea, "to have you up there all alone this afternoon, and play to you while the sunset comes and lays purple shadows



over the square and dims the far corners of the room even while it paints the ceiling rose and salmon."

"You are still a funny man," said the girl, smiling.

"It would be very pleasant," he repeated, stolidly. "Just you and Purcell and the sunset. And I don't insist on Purcell."

"Oh, it wouldn't be proper without Purcell," she laughed.

"But it would be pleasant—say it would be pleasant." He turned toward her, and unexpectedly found her wide-open gaze upon his face. He looked quickly away, for he felt the gaze had not been meant for him to see. But he heard her voice say softly:

"It would be very pleasant. Why do you torment me?"

"The curtains will be drawn and the rooms closed up day after to-morrow," he said, presently. "I'm going away to-morrow night."

The girl made no reply, and he turned to look at her. Her face was even paler than it had been when she first came out of her winter confinement in the unsanitary old schoolhouse, bringing her pale children into the sun of the square, and she looked tired. "Poor little girl," he said, "you look as if you ought to go away yourself and rest."

"I don't need rest," she said, in a measured voice. "But aren't you leaving town early?"

"I'm only going to Cincinnati to cover the festival," he replied. "I'll be back in two weeks."

He watched her face closely. A faint wave of pink flushed into her cheeks and she smiled. "I'll look at your windows every day to see that no burglar has broken them," she said.

He continued to look at her. "You are glad I'm coming back, then?" he asked, low and eagerly, leaning a little toward her.

Her eyes besought him not to make her answer, and she turned her face away.

"Bo Peep," he said, drawing closer to her and laying his fingers, almost as if he were afraid to do it, on her arm, "tell me. Are you glad?"

"Would you be glad if I were glad?" she asked, her face still averted.

"I should be the happiest man alive," he said, and his hand slipped gently down over hers, which was not withdrawn for the space of several seconds.

"Then I am very glad," she said, turning her face to his, and flashing once more the merriment from the deep well behind her eyes. She shot a glance to see if they had been observed. But the passers on that walk were only children, and the carriages and drays were rolling heedlessly by on the avenue.

He looked at her smiling.

"Bo Peep," he said, "you have the loveliest hair in all the world."

"Men say that to a woman when they have nothing else that is flattering to say," she remarked, scornfully.

"And you have a snub nose," he reflected.

"If you are going to make remarks about my nose I am going home," she said, rising. He protested. "I am going home, anyway," she continued. "Mother will think I am lost, instead of my sheep. You may come with me as far as MacDougal Street."

"No further?" he complained.

"No further," she said, decidedly. "The Pagan world stops there."

"What are you beyond McDougal Street, Bo Peep?" he inquired.

"A prim little old maid school marm," said she. "Oh, so prim and proper!"

"I shall send a note to the school when I get back," he said, as he bade her good-by at the corner of the square. "I should rather come myself, but since you are only Pagan in the square, so be it." And he watched her trim figure vanish down the street to the westward, bearing proudly its wealth of yellow hair.

His two weeks of absence became three, and then almost four, because from Cincinnati he was sent further west to St. Louis, where he labored on a special article about music at the great fair then in progress. It was no easy work, this daily sitting out the performances of great chorals, listening to performers painfully familiar to him, so

that their every inflection could be predicted, however unfamiliar the work, gathering into active memory his knowledge of a hundred scattered branches of musical art to meet the demands of the varied programs which followed each other in quick succession, the nightly grind of copy at the telegraph office. But what made it still harder was the persistent longing for the presence beside him of the little teacher. There were no beauties in the performances that he did not desire to share with her, there were no stretches of dreariness when he did not fall into a mood of revolt against the whole practice of criticism, balancing how much more interesting and worth while to him, the critic, were his own human affairs, his moods and affections, than the greatest musical masterpieces. He was under a constant strain to keep the necessary intellectual detachment rightly to estimate and record what he heard, and each night, after his work was over, he left the other musical writers as soon as might be, and went out under the soft stars and let his mind play as it would with the image of the little teacher.

As his reviews would sufficiently indicate his whereabouts, he did not deem it necessary, when his original two weeks were expired, to write to her the causes for his prolonged absence. Much as he desired to put himself in touch with her, not only then, but every day, he felt that she would regard it as an infringement of the reserve she had laid down about herself "west of MacDougal Street," and he respected her point of view, though he was, perhaps, not wholly able to understand it. It had to suffice that he went to sleep every night with her image behind his eyelids and a great and growing hunger for her in his heart.

His work finished at last, he began the homeward journey, that seemed endless, and that grew more and more physically uncomfortable for the increasing heat. It was still June, but dog-day weather held the town in a suffocating grasp when he reached New York one noon. In his airy apartments

above the square it was easy to be comparatively comfortable, but his heart went out for Bo Peep in her stuffy schoolroom. He rang for a messenger boy at once, and hastily wrote a note, which read:

DEAR BO PEEP: I'm back at last. Only one thing will make the town endurable in this heat—a sight of you. Poor child, if you are not quite baked by now, can you come home through the square?

Then he read it and was dissatisfied, and added, as a postscript:

Please come! I've missed you so very, very much, how much I won't trust this boy to carry. Or, better, let me come to you.

He waited impatiently for an answer, which by and by came. He remembered, as he hastily tore open the envelope, that he had never seen her handwriting before, which was firm and decisive, with curious, chubby little e's.

FUNNY MAN: I can't come through the square this afternoon; there is a horrid teacher's meeting which will last till dinner time. For the same reason, if no other, you can't come to me. Oh, it has been so hot, and all the lambs are nearly roasted!

Bitterly disappointed, he turned the page. And there, it seemed to him with intention, like the laugh that lurked behind her eyes, was another sentence:

But it's not dark till late now, and I'll beg off to take a walk after tea and come to the bench by the fountain, if you really want me to. Vacation begins next week, or I wouldn't do it; anyway, it's too hot to be anything but Pagan. Be there at seven, please. Lone spinsters are timid after nightfall.

As the sun leveled down into the west a breeze sprang up, and before the appointed hour the square was fresh and pleasant. The traffic of the day was over, the last of the army of home-going workers at day's end had passed, and the evening exodus into the open space from the adjoining blocks had hardly begun when Lowell went out to the fountain. Looking west, one would have said the day was not yet over;

looking east, the twilight made its presence felt. But Lowell had other reason than this for facing westward. Her note had brought suddenly home to him that the term of their acquaintance on its present basis was over, or would be over in a few days. There was no time to lose. He strained his eyes through the fast thickening throng of children which filled the paths of the square, to catch the first glimpse of her coming.

And soon the figure that had filled his dreams appeared, unexpectedly, from behind a group of strollers. The western sky above the housetops was rose and gold, and to his eyes, made suddenly misty with the shock of gladness, there seemed something of its glory suffused in her abundant hair. She moved, lithe and trim, quickly toward the spot where he stood, the one being in that throng, the one being in all the world whom he desired. He saw nothing else but her as she drew near, and he held out both his hands with a cry, and smothered hers within them.

"Dear little Pagan, dear little girl," he said, "you have been so good to me!"

"Am I good to you?" She looked up in his face happily. "Then you don't think it was horrid of me to come this way, after tea, running away from home to do it?"

He smiled back at her. "Funny girl," he said.

"I can't stay long, though," she continued. "Oh, only a minute or two. Mother and aunty were shocked at my going out alone at all, but I told them I couldn't get through to-morrow if I didn't get some of this cool air—which was pretty nearly the truth." She finished with a tired laugh.

He looked at her more closely, and saw that the color which had been in her face when she greeted him was fading, and that she looked pathetically frail and tired.

"Poor girl!" he said, gravely, his heart suddenly stirred with a great pity and a desire more than ever to possess and to protect her. "I'm so glad next week is vacation, and you can do nothing but rest."

"Are you?" said she.

"Indeed I am," he answered. "And you will find Andover the ideal spot to rest in."

She looked at him and laughed a little. "I shall rest in Grove Street," she said, "unless I run away with some of the lambs to play in the sand at Coney Island."

"Oh, no, you won't," he retorted, with decision; "you will rest in Andover."

She made no reply, and he continued, with sudden earnestness:

"Bo Peep, we are friends, you and I, good friends, as I said we were going to be. Mother April made us that, and gave us Washington Square to play in. But are we going to break off our friendship, to stop our playing, because Washington Square is to know us no more? Vacation will be here in a few brief days. Are you going to make this the end?"

The girl moved her hands one over the other in her lap nervously; but she kept her face averted and made no reply. They sat facing the east, where the twilight was gathering and dimming the square. His voice was lower, more intense, as he continued:

"I can't let you do it, even if you want to," he said, and at these words she clasped her one hand with the other more tightly. "I have learned in these last months very little that is new about music, but a great deal about life, my own life. I have learned that it cannot well go on—my life—with any comfort, any content, with anything but restlessness and longing, unless you are in it, intimately close within it. I learned all this because I love you, little shepherdess, because I love you very much, your harvest hair and your little snub nose, and your rosebud mouth and the motherly heart of you."

His words fell into a low cadence, almost as if he were singing a happy song to himself, and then stopped abruptly, for he saw the shoulders beside him heaving, and heard a smothered sob.

"Dearest!" he cried, softly, laying his hand on her arm, "what have I done?"

She turned and raised her face to

his, and tears, not laughter, lay deep in her eyes. But her lips smiled. "Can't you see?" she said. "You have made me so happy!"

He laughed a low laugh. "Well, you will come to Andover, won't you?"

"Dear, quiet, green, restful Andover, no dust and no noise," she murmured, sighing contentedly, and slipping her hand down beside her where he could touch it unobserved in the gathering twilight.

"And no troublesome lambs any more," he added.

"Why do you love me?" she asked, presently. "You don't even know me. Are you aware we've not seen each other a half dozen times?"

"I will answer like a true Yankee," he replied. "Why, by the same token, do you love me?"

"That is answer enough," she murmured.

The twilight deepened, and with a sudden, startled recollection of her promise on leaving home, she rose to go. They walked through the throng-

ing square in the dusk, quite silent, their bodies leaning close together in intimate, sweet content. At the corner of her street they stopped to part.

"No further to-night," she said. "I have yet to tell mother and aunty—one awful hour before my real happiness can begin! And then to-morrow night you must come—they will never quite forgive us till they see you, even though they know who you are. I don't know if they'll ever forgive me."

"Poor girlie," he said. "Paganism has its penalties!"

"And its rewards," said she. "You shall play us Purcell to-morrow."

"I attempt from love's sickness to fly?" he queried.

"No," she said, putting a finger on his lips, which he quickly kissed. "The dog star one, of course. I could tear the rainbow from the sky myself to-night and 'tye both ends together.'"

"How would you tie them?" he asked.

"In a lover's knot," she laughed, and left him alone on the corner.



## THE SECOND WIFE

I WATCHED with aching heart these many years

His loveless married life, and dared not moan.

I envied her, with bitter, anguished tears,

Grudged her her slighted treasure that I, eager, might not own.

I hated her, but not a word was said.

It seemed as it must scorch her—my soul's fire;

But she suspected nothing. Now she's dead.

And I have now, at last—ah, me! how late!—my heart's desire.

My vanished youth and beauty how I crave!

I clutched at them with helpless, futile hands,

And saw them go—and could not stay nor save—

Like precious essence spilling, drop by drop, upon the sands.

I still may be his counsellor and friend

(My hungry heart thus tells its scanty gold),

May be his close companion to the end;

But the sweet rapture of the lover—nay! For that I am too old.

ANNIE C. MUIRHEAD.

# POVERTY'S PRISONER

By M. H. Vorse

**L**ONG after the prodigal's return, details of the final episode drifted back to his father. It was Colonel Holt who gave the most important. Said he:

"And he had the impudence to cut me; cut me dead in the streets of Venice. And after having entertained me like a prince not three months before! I was prowling around on one of the streets in the Giudecca, and out of the greasiest, dirtiest fisherman's restaurant comes your son. I almost ran into him. He was dressed in the kind of thing that's fashionable in that sort of a place. Begad! he looked like a Dago workman!" And Colonel Holt turned an eye on his friend to see how he was taking it. Judge Knightley was "taking it" like a monument to Puritanism. His massive head was turned square on his visitor, the finger tips of his long hands rested lightly together.

"Yes?" he replied, encouragingly.

The colonel permitted him to wait while he lighted a cigar.

"Hello, Larry," I said, and he looked me square in the eye, sir, and answered 'Scusi?' I saw what *that* meant. No experiment in economics in his! He was dead broke. I suppose I wasn't what you'll call tactful. 'See, here,' said I, 'let me help you out of this.' He never turned a hair to show he'd ever clapped an eye on me before. '*Il signor desidero?*' was all I got out of him."

"And how did you answer that?" inquired Larry's father.

"We-e-ll—I suppose I said, 'Oh, go to the devil!'" Colonel Holt was not quite so triumphant this time. "The

fact is, Larry was so deuced cool, it stuck in my crop. '*Permesso?*' says the young dog, as polite as a Dago, and then he turned a corner and vanished. Gad! but you're a stiff-necked generation, root and branch," finished the colonel, with unction.

"Lawrence ought to know something about Venice," Judge Knightley mused. "He began his residence there, I understand, in a palace on the grand canal—and he ended up where you saw him."

"He ought never to have seen the inside of a place like that!" Colonel Holt wasn't happy unless he had some one to sputter at. "Why didn't you look after your son? Because of your absurd prejudices about his being a painter?"

"Because," said Larry's father, slowly, and his calm irritated his friend still further—"because I wanted no *diletantes* in my family. Because I wanted my son to be a man."

"Better a dead man than a live *diletante*, I suppose you thought. You don't deserve a son!"

"He could have had an allowance by applying to me. I told him to let me know when he'd gotten through with his own money."

The judge was not defending himself. He was merely stating a fact.

"You're a stiff-necked lot, one as bad as the other," grumbled his friend. "A set of Quixotic asses!"

If the colonel had only known it, Larry hadn't been as stiff-necked that day as he seemed.

The whole business was getting past a joke, and the worst of it was, there didn't seem to be any way out of it.

And the help that the colonel offered—it was what our grandmothers would have called providential—was so opportune that Larry was afraid that a little more and he would have accepted it, and that would have been tantamount to appealing to his father.

At twenty-eight one is a little too old to play the prodigal son, especially when one has no tale to tell of anything worse than foolish carelessness.

It had taken Larry some time to come down from the palace on the grand canal to the fisherman's restaurant on the Giudecca. He wished it could have happened in one gorgeous crash. But he had "come down in the world gently," absorbed in his work, not realizing what lay ahead of him. Oh, he was an excellent authority on different sorts of dwelling places in Venice! Various grades of hotels and *pensions*, he knew them all. Furnished rooms and cheap *trattorias* he could tell about. The worst had been when at last he had felt in honesty bound to send away his man, Francesco—for Francesco had refused to go. He had made scenes. He had pointed out that he had been with Larry eight years and had grown fat in his service. He had refused to believe that his master's fortunes were in more than temporary abeyance. So at last poor Larry had actually been forced to run away from this too faithful servant, to sneak out of his lodgings like a thief.

This done he took the final plunge. The *Monte di Pietà* had seen what few things of value he possessed long before this; now his clothes went the same road. Larry bought workmen's clothes—for now it was work with his hands or starve—and the Venice of the poor man swallowed him up. Of course, he might have temporized, lived on credit, borrowed, but that didn't happen to be Larry's way. He wasn't fertile in compromises of that sort.

Had he been a writer instead of a painter, Knightley reflected, his present experience would have been invaluable. For himself, Larry was inclined to consider it an entire waste of time; worse than that, it was a strain on the nerves and temper; for, when you come

down to it, it is uncomfortable to be stranded in a foreign town, with next to nothing in your pocket, and with the assurance that in a few days the next to nothing will become nothing at all.

When that happened, then, indeed, Knightley told himself he would be "on the beach." For beyond his pictures—and there were not many of them—all Larry Knightley's property consisted of a handsome gondola. He had hung on to that until a purchaser willing to pay a reasonable price should be found, for with belated wisdom he had seen that he must somehow raise money to get home, where he could find work to do.

Until the gondola was sold, then, he was poverty's prisoner, with Venice for his prison.

As an intelligent patient observes the symptoms of his disease, Larry watched himself develop, one after another, the characteristics he had observed in other men who were "dead broke." For instance, he had imagined he would never be a post-office haunter. There was no tardy remittance to come to him; there was no money to come from anywhere, unless he should sell a picture, a thing that had never happened. Yet, with a certain melancholy interest in his perversity, Larry found himself every day at the Central Post looking for the impossible letter that should set him free! It was there that he went after his encounter with the colonel. But he escaped one offer of assistance only to find himself confronted with another. Evidently fate was not going to let him get out of his difficulty unaided, he thought, for at the door of the post office Francesco, careworn and anxious, confronted him.

There was a "found at last" look on the faithful creature's countenance, when he beheld his ex-master, that irritated Larry extremely. He was further irritated by the happiness that the sight of Francesco caused him.

"I hope you have got a good place," he said, pleasantly, to Francesco, in a tone that was carefully every day. If things were not managed with care, the meeting would, he foresaw, have a



touch of sentiment. Francesco looked at him reproachfully.

"I have no place at all. Has the signor his gondola?" It was like an Ollendorf conversation. Knightley laughed.

"I have a gondola. Have you an idea?" he replied.

"I have some *signori forestieri* who desire to rent a gondola such as I have described the signor's to be. And I have asked them a price!"

"You've a great head!" said Knightley, with admiration. In the rather dazed condition in which he found himself, renting his gondola had not occurred to him.

"So at least the signor will not starve while he is making up his mind to write to his father," concluded Francesco. He at least had no doubt as to what course his master should pursue.

"You old fool!" said Larry, affectionately. "But, see here, if those people want a gondola, they will want gondoliers?"

"Without doubt," assented Francesco.

"Well, what's the matter with you and me?" inquired Larry. "You can be inside man, besides, you know." It was half in joke that he threw it out—and Francesco, if he had allowed himself a moment for thought, would have known better than to oppose his master, monstrous as the idea seemed to him.

"The signor couldn't stand the hard work," he gasped. "It isn't suitable—such things aren't done. The signor can't intend to demean himself—"

"You watch the signor and see what he will do," said Larry. Like many other Americans, he had learned to run his own gondola; in fact, he had kept himself in condition that way. The Venetians themselves acknowledge that an American can put more power into a stroke than they can, though no American can ever learn the art of nursing a gondola through the small canals.

As Larry toiled his gondola along the grand canal, to the palace in which Francesco had informed him the *fores-*

*tieri* had rented apartments for two months, he felt that he was as good a gondolier as any Venetian. The idea of earning money with his own hands exhilarated him; any relief from the unsavory stagnation of the past week was grateful.

Just then they passed a gondola in which were two girls, undoubtedly Americans. One of them was very blond, very young, exquisitely pretty.

Larry recognized her at once. It was the little girl of his adventure of the autumn before.

"I hope you've got some one with you this time who knows how to look after you," he said to himself.

The whole fantastic scene came back to him. He had been listening to the singers on the Grand Canal, and in the fitful light of the colored lanterns he had noticed this girl. She was quite alone, exquisitely and conspicuously dressed, and entirely unconscious of the men in the various gondolas who were staring at her. The crush of gondolas was greater than usual, and presently Larry's gondola was beside hers. It seemed absurd for her to be there alone in the midst of these tourists, some of whom leered and nodded at her. Then—just how it happened Larry never knew, some of the agents in it were a drunken gondolier, and two grinning Austrian tourists—came her little cry of terror as the men leaned over into her gondola, and Larry found himself saying in a tone of calm authority:

"Please get into my gondola *at once* and let me take you out of this." And in another moment she was beside him, half crying:

"How could they! Oh, how could they!"

"How came you to go out alone at night?" said Larry, sternly. "Don't you know you ought never to go out alone in a European city? Haven't you any relatives to take care of you?"

"I didn't know," she said. "I've been out in the gondola alone before. It's so lovely." She had crouched back in a corner, ashamed and silent.

"Well, please never do such a thing

again! You aren't traveling alone, I hope?" Larry had demanded.

"My cousin's with me, but she gets so tired sightseeing—and it was so lovely and my last night." She was so apologetic and so humble, so overcome by the scene she had just passed through, that Larry's heart smote him.

"Listen," he said, more gently. "You must never go out at night alone. And you must never go out day or night alone with any foreigner—any man, I mean, however well you may know him."

Larry thought he had never heard anything so innocent as the tone with which she pondered:

"Why not?"

Evil, or any imagination of evil, was so far from her that no explanation was possible. The inner significance of the episode had escaped her entirely. She had her own candid little explanation ready.

"Those men, those dreadful men were *drunk*." She gave this out in a tone of hushed horror.

"Your gondolier was drunk," agreed Larry.

"Oh, I think it's too awful the way they all drink wine over here," she cried. "I was told about it before I came, but I didn't believe it."

It was a whole explanation in itself as to what sort of a place she came from, and what sort of a life she had led. It was from a small place where the old Puritan traditions still lingered, and where the temperance movement was strong. Drunkenness—the worst of all crimes—was her explanation for the two leering tourists.

"Yes, they all drink wine, and they are in many other ways very different from us," agreed Larry. It was, perhaps, none of his business, he acknowledged, but he felt he couldn't let her go without giving her some warning as to the people she found herself among. Evidently the cousin, whoever she was, was as innocent as the little girl herself. "Their women are very differently brought up. The nice girls never go in the street alone, never speak alone to a man until they are married."

"How silly," said his companion. "Why?"

"And if one wishes to be thought a nice girl, when one has anything to do with foreigners, one must conform to their customs."

He knew he sounded sententious, but as you will have seen, Larry Knightley was an obstinate fellow—mulish, said his enemies—and he carried through to the end any task he had set himself.

"I think Italians are just lovely," the little girl answered. "I met some on board ship, and they were perfect gentlemen. I studied Italian before I came over," she added, with a certain naïve pride.

Larry was not to be put off. "Promise me," he persisted, "that you will never go out alone at night—you oughtn't, you know."

"I don't want to do anything wrong," she said, seriously.

They drew up by the Riva Schiavoni, in front of her hotel.

"You've been very good—even if you did scold me;" there was gratitude in her voice—and a touch of coquetry. "And I should love to ask you to come and see me, but we're leaving to-morrow."

Larry had just time to say he had been glad to be of service, and to hand her his card, before she ran quickly into the hotel.

That had been in September, and now it was May. At this distance of time, Larry told himself that he had been a sententious, meddling ass. After all, a man may bring aid to a damsel in distress without giving her a lecture as well.

Then the little girl and his adventure were driven from his mind by what to him was the amusing farce of being engaged as gondolier under the name of Vittorio Emmanuele, by a certain Mr. Joel Coates, a little gentleman with a cartilaginous nose, a puissant chin, and the semi-clerical air that certain business men wear when taking a holiday. He was deacon, or elder, or vestryman of his church, that Larry decided at once.

He was assisted in the engaging of

his gondola by Mrs. Coates, a fragile little lady, with gentle, hesitating manners, and by a polyglot factotum. Larry enjoyed being engaged. He enjoyed Francesco's horror at the whole proceeding, and he enjoyed, more than anything else, declaring under Francesco's nose, when little Mrs. Coates faltered forth a timid request for references, that he, too, had been for many years in the employ of Mr. Lawrence Knightley. Just then a second gondola slid up to the steps, and Knightley's heart gave a great thump, for out of it stepped the little girl of his adventure.

He hated himself for wishing so ardently she wouldn't recognize him. About his friends he didn't care. But he had been so wise and superior at their last meeting. No, he didn't want to be recognized at all.

"I guess we've got about what you wanted, Isadore," said the old gentleman, complacently, to the girl whom Larry had identified as the cousin. "It's about the handsomest boat I've seen in this town."

"And look at that gondolier. Aunt Em, isn't he grand? Why, he's the handsomest man I ever saw! I think I'll elope with the gondolier."

"I think you won't," thought Larry, who felt an unreasonable disgust for this handsome, dark girl.

"Did you ever see anyone so stunning?" she demanded. Larry's little friend was regarding him earnestly, but he avoided her eye and gazed with a good imitation of unconscious ease across the canal. His heart stood still as she still looked at him with grave eyes.

"I'm trying to think where I saw him before!" she said.

If she did recognize him, if she did call him by name, Lawrence the Magnificent would be in as unpleasantly grotesque a position as a man can well be.

"They've both been working for Lawrence Knightley—I guess that must be Judge Knightley's son—so I'll feel real comfortable about having you girls out alone with them," said Mrs. Coates. "If

I'd realized what Venice was like, I'd never have slept a minute when you were here by yourselves."

Little Miss Coates had not for a moment taken her thoughtful eyes from Larry's face. Up to this time she had given no sign of recognition; perhaps, thought Larry, his name would give her the clew.

But the dangerous moment passed and Larry was not found out. His suspense was put an end to by the handsome cousin, who wished to know if the gondoliers were not to come in white uniforms, with sashes, like the other swell gondoliers. And to Lawrence's abiding shame, she added: "And that one isn't shaved, either! Tell him, Uncle Joel, he's always got to come shaved and looking neat."

"Oh, my dear," objected her aunt, "I'm sure any gondoliers who've worked for Americans won't need to be told that!"

The little factotum was translating the commands of the *signori* in an offensively important tone.

"Never mind," said Larry's little friend in English, "I won't let Isadore bully you. I think you both look like white men—and nice and clean."

And that Larry felt a shamefaced gratitude at being called "nice and clean" shows how quickly one may slip down in the social scale, and how one's view of the world differs when one looks up instead of looking down.

It is at this point that Colonel Holt must again round out the picture of the prodigal's career with a few luminous details.

"Darn him, he kept me awake nights, you know, you and he between you; for, after I'd gotten through lying awake worrying about him, I'd lie awake being mad to think it was me who was losing sleep, instead of you, as you should have been. I had scoured Venice trying to catch sight of Larry, when I ran into old Coates.

"Come on," he says, 'and go out with me in my gondola; I guess the girls don't want it. I've got the handsomest boat and the two best gondoliers in

Venice. I tell you, colonel, it takes an American to break in these Dagoes. These two used to be young Knightley's men, Judge Knightley's son, and there's no Italian lie-in-the-sun-and-sleep about 'em.' Well, when we got to the piazzetta, there stands my fine Larry. Oh, he was a beaut! Dressed all in white, with one of those dinky gondoliers' hats, with long ribbons, begad! and a crimson sash around his waist, with gold fringe. He was such a picture I snapped my kodak on him. I had my innings, all right, for the way he'd treated me—a sunset was nothing beside him when he saw me.

"So, my man," said I, 'you've left Mr. Knightley's service, after all.'

"*Si, signor,*" says the young Dago. 'Signor Knightley had no further use for me.'

"Never mind," says one of the girls. 'He's having the time of his life, and we're going to take him home to America!'

"Be sure you do, Miss Isadore," says I. 'Take him home and make a good American out of him.'

"All the time Francesco was looking at me with sad, round eyes. I could almost hear him say: 'He's mad, he's crazy—take him home to his father;' and you should have seen Larry's lovely crimson ears. Just the same, my mind was relieved. Says I: 'Serves 'em right, father and son.' So I just dropped you a line instead of cabling, as I'd thought of doing. I remembered how you'd said you'd feather his nest as soon as he took to any honest work. 'Gondoliering,' thinks I, 'is as honest as any other work, though a trade not much followed at home; but I guess this picture'll bring that old turkey buzzard off his perch.' So I just inclosed you the picture of your son—and it *did* fetch you, begad." The colonel laughed, and so did the judge.

"It won't hurt Larry now," I thought. 'Especially as he's the ladies' pet. Perhaps it will knock some of the everlasting pride out of him.'

"You know Mr. Knightley, don't you?" said Miss Isadore.

"Just a little, Miss Isadore," said I.

"He's a painter chap, I believe?" asks old Coates.

"He's a young fool!" says I, looking up at Larry's nice red ears—he ran the forward oar, you know, not three feet from me.

"I don't believe he's a fool!" says little Miss Ruth Coates, getting all pink. 'I met him once, and he was very kind to me.'

"You met him once?" I stared at her.

"Why, daughter, I didn't know you knew him," says the old gentleman.

"I don't know him. I shouldn't know him if I saw him," she said. 'But he was very kind to me once, just the same, and I'll never forget it.'

"At any rate, *we're* glad he's left us his gondoliers. I don't know what the girls would do without Vittorio. It's Vittorio here and Vittorio there all day!'

"I like Vittorio better than any dog I ever owned," says Miss Isadore. 'He's so nice and big and good-looking, and he's got such lovely, intelligent eyes.' Lovely, intelligent eyes, mind you! That's what she said. I could just feel the cold chills going down Larry's back.

"I roared, and when I got out of the gondola, you bet I got even with him for his behavior the week before.

"Yes, sir, *I tipped him two francs,* and Francesco looked as if he'd like to eat me! If I had a son I'd see he didn't get into such scrapes!"

Colonel Holt had been right about the cold chills. Poor Larry wasn't the kind of man to take it all with a laugh. It made him supremely uncomfortable to have his good looks commented on a dozen times a day.

When Isadore Coates would cry, "Isn't he a darling! Did you ever *see* anything so good-looking in all your life?" he not only felt like an eaves-dropping cad, but he longed to strangle her then and there. His little friend, Ruth, won his undying gratitude that she neither spoke of him as "a darling" nor commented on his appearance. Yet she was very kind to him, and treated him almost as an equal. In those days Larry had an uncanny feeling that he

was two distinct individuals. The magnificent Lawrence Knightley, censor of manners, criticised Ruth Coates for her too great friendliness toward a servant, while the humble Vittorio, gratefully, even eagerly, accepted this kindness. Still, even the magnificent Lawrence's heart was softened when he heard Ruth come forth bravely as his champion, the morning the colonel had called him "a young fool."

Of course, you see what happened! It is so obvious that there's no use making any mystery of it.

Vittorio fell in love with Ruth Coates, his employer's daughter. Lawrence argued with him about it, told him it wouldn't do, called him names, and pointed out that, on the one hand, he, Vittorio, was a servant and had not the wherewithal to support a wife, and that, on the other, when Vittorio should disappear and Lawrence come back to earth again, the latter would probably view the whole affair in a different light. Lawrence had always admired a type of woman the exact opposite of his little friend. He had never cared for immature girls, having found that extreme unsophistication and rawness were apt to go hand in hand. Above all, the naive, sightseeing American was his abomination, and that was exactly what his employers were! He shuddered every time he thought of Ruth out alone on the canal at night. But, in spite of all this, Vittorio fell doggedly in love—little Miss Ruth was so kind, so pretty, so fresh, so unspoiled. He couldn't help seeing this, for she hadn't an affectation in which to hide herself!

If Larry shuddered over that first escape of hers, it wasn't the last! His lecture had evidently fallen on ground unsuited for it.

The subtle science of chaperonage had never dawned on the simple and innocent mind of Mrs. Coates. She was only too glad to let "the girls" take the initiative, only too happy to have them go their own way.

When she wished to do some little sightseeing on her own account, she actually asked them if she might have

the gondola, and her gentle, hesitating manner, as she deferred to the wishes of her handsome niece, or set her own wishes aside to accomplish those of her pretty daughter, made Larry hot with anger. He might himself be as stiff-necked and strong-willed as his own parent, but he respected his father none the less, and this *laissez faire*, flabby way of bringing up girls revolted him.

It revolted him all the more as he saw it not only through his own eyes, but through the eyes of the Italians. He had been less than three weeks in the employ of the Coates when the "girls' pet," as Mr. Coates facetiously called him, suffered an eclipse. Through other friends, the two Misses Coates became acquainted with some officers, and it wasn't long before half the officers of the Venetian garrison were buzzing around these two independent young ladies—like moths around a flame, a politer person than Larry might have said—he said like flies around the sugar bowl.

And Larry, from his impartial position, was able to look down or up at the interesting spectacle of people of two great nations laughing at each other, each holding their sides with mirth over the others' barbarous or mediæval customs.

For the Italians, the Americans were fair game, to try to marry if there was money enough in it. If not to marry, then to flirt with, for to an European there is nothing so piquant as flirting with a young girl precisely as if she were a married woman. They never understand, they never learn, the Italians, just what the freedom means that our girls are allowed. They go as far as they can, and when a snub and a "go about your business" puts an end to encroachments, they stand open-mouthed, not knowing in what way they have violated the rules of the game.

Larry watched this game of national blind man's buff, sometimes with anger, often with amusement, always with uneasiness. There were times when he longed to dust the neat jackets of the little officers, and there were other

times when he longed to shake "the girls," and send them to bed without supper.

When he heard the Italians talk about the status of the American parent, agreeing that the mother held no higher position than that of a governess, he couldn't blame them.

And when the girls went out alone together, exchanging confidences and laughing themselves pink over their admirers' florid compliments, Larry had his moments of silent amusement. For instance, he would hear scraps of conversation between the girls like this:

"And he said: 'If I walk out with a young ladee, do I talk to hair of meenerologic—of botonee? No! I talk to hair the one language, the spitch of all the worl'!' Then he beat his breast. 'Signorina, do you know what that is?' 'Volapük?' I asked. 'Ah, crool, crool Cattiva!' he said, and, Isadore, he shook his finger at me! 'No, it is luff! Do you know de spitch of luff?' he asked me. I thought I should die laughing. Oh, I simply *love* them when they talk English—and they have the dearest eyes."

"I think uniforms are perfectly sweet, anyway," agreed Isadore.

She certainly did, for it was frequently Larry's duty to row this young lady far out on the lagoon, with one of the gentlemen fortunate enough to wear the adored uniform. Behind him went on half-whispered conversations, and Larry felt as indiscreet as if he were not a servant, while Francesco on returning—for Francesco behind saw everything—would be a monument of cold disapproval, for he had his ideas as to how the high born should behave.

But if Isadore Coates flirted outrageously, Ruth was a little coquette, though the amusements she got out of it were not the ones that appealed to her cousin.

She had a sense of humor, Larry discovered; she loved the absurd side of it, the high-flown phrases charmed her. She loved to hear her friends talk of the "hot luff" of the Italian; she loved to hear them cry out, "De American, he is col", he is a block of ice, he haf feesh blood." Moreover, if Ruth coquetted,

she had a gentle dignity which well became her.

Still, Vittorio writhed at the flirtations that went on in the seat behind him, while Lawrence disapproved of the free way in which Ruth went around with these Italians.

But if he was uncomfortable, there was another American still more so. That was Mr. Joel Coates, for he, poor gentleman, was learning more of effete European customs than he had bargained for.

Let Colonel Holt tell of his misery! It was all part of the story he told Larry's father.

"I happened to be passing by San Pantalon one day," he said. "It was after six, and there was some sort of a shindy on, so I thought I'd go in and see the crowd. All hunched up in a far-off corner was a man I thought I recognized. I went up, and, sure enough, there sat old Coates. I clapped a hand on his shoulder, and he jumped 'most to the roof.

"'Dear me, how you startled me, colonel!' he said. 'I thought it was that man! I thought he'd tracked me here.' 'What man?' said I. 'That officer,' said he. 'I tell you, colonel, I won't stand it, that's all! I'll be darned if I will! I'll leave Italy, girls or no girls.' 'Why, what's the matter?' said I. He was all flustered. 'Matter!' says he. 'The matter's that I'm not going to be proposed to by any more Dago officers; I'm over here for a rest, and my nerves won't stand it!'

"'What do you mean?' I asked him. 'Darn 'em,' he said, all excited. 'It's Ruth they want to marry. Well, why don't they go to *her* then? What need have they got to come pestering me? I've been caught twice, but when I got a note to-day asking for an interview late this afternoon. 'No, you don't,' said I, 'not much'; and foxy grandpa just quietly left his happy home! I tell you, colonel, it's awful unsettling to have foreigners come popping the question at you.'

"And the rest of the time he was in Venice," concluded the colonel, "the poor old boy spent his time running



whenever he saw a uniform. 'And the worst of it is, colonel,' he told me, 'I'm a Christian man, I hope, and I've always counted for a mild one, but when these little Ginnies come around asking to marry my Ruth, it's all I can do to keep my hands off 'em. I never wanted to hurt a fellow man before; and how the girls can stand 'em, beats me. Women are queer kittle-kattle!'

These episodes were disturbing to Ruth as well, and she couldn't help noticing that if Isadore seemed more popular, it was herself who received proposals of marriage, and it was also herself who was the heiress.

This checked any incipient fancy she might have had; besides this, Larry heard her say to Isadore:

"They don't seem like real men, anyway, do they? More like Javanese, or something queer."

Larry fervently wished that some of her suitors who went off twirling their mustaches victoriously might have heard her; and he was also pleased when Ruth rejoiced that "poor papa had to take the brunt of it."

It was to prevent further misunderstanding that Ruth, in her innocence, cultivated a certain Captain De Santis, a married man, whose wife was then absent from Venice—otherwise, he explained, it would have been his great pleasure to have brought her to call on his American friends, a statement the truth of which Larry doubted.

This captain was called by the girls "the pocket beauty;" but if he was short of stature, he was well built and singularly good-looking, even for an Italian. Larry hated the way he looked at Ruth; he wondered if she was so innocent that she couldn't see that it was an affront.

To his horror, he heard Ruth tell the captain, in her charming little manner, which in reality was all kindness, but which her Italian friends thought was all coquetry:

"I am so glad you're married—one can be nice to a married man, and good friends with him, and there's never any trouble."

"A married man knows more of the

ways of the world than a boy," agreed the little captain, beaming on Ruth.

"At home I'm the best friends with all my friends' husbands—I look after them when their wives are out of town. Poor things, they're *so* lonely," went on Innocence.

If she had looked at her forward gondolier, Ruth might have seen he had what Colonel Holt called "lovely crimson ears." Larry knew well enough the interpretation Captain De Santis would put on this naïve declaration.

"And so," went on Ruth's voice, "it will seem quite like old times to be taking care of you, for I know how lonely you must be."

"I'm not at all lonely since you have taken pity on me," replied the captain. As he said, he was a man of the world, and he was going "*piano, piano*," even in the face of what seemed to him an open confession.

Next day a party was arranged to make an excursion to one of the small islands near Venice. They were to have tea *al fresco*, and there were to be three gondolas. An American friend, Mr. Booth, had turned up, and Isadore and he were to go together; the older people in a second gondola, and the captain and Ruth in a third. This pairing off of the young people, like the animals about to enter the ark, seemed natural and right to the unsophisticated Mrs. Coates. Larry, nervous and impatient, waited to see which party he was to carry, when by a lucky chance the older people were packed off in the captain's gondola—Larry thought that the captain was rather glad to get rid of his own gondoliers.

Larry looks back on that afternoon as the most uncomfortable he ever passed.

The tea went off pleasantly, and they embarked for home in the lovely Venetian evening. The setting sun made living opal of the water, and the horrified Lawrence heard his sweetheart say dreamily, as if she were thinking aloud:

"Venice simply cries out for romance!"

It was Larry's fate to follow her through the moods of that lovely evening, to hear just a note of anxiety in her

gay talk—at something in the captain's manner she didn't understand. Then her gayety died down, she became distant and dignified, and tried to turn the conversation from the personal trend it had taken.

There is a little island not far from Venice, upon which the insane asylum is situated, and it was while they were skirting its shores that Larry heard Ruth give a little, startled cry—an echo from the year before. Again he came to her aid, as he had come that other time, nor could he ever give himself a clear account of what happened. He only knew that one Italian officer, pale with rage, was standing in the shallow water near the island, while a gondolier, some six feet three in height, harangued him in fluent English.

"Be thankful," he said, "that I have merely put you ashore." This was a euphemism, for some eighteen inches of water covered the alleged shore. "I shan't give you a thrashing, for, in the first place, I should kill you, and, in the second, it's not your fault—entirely. There's no use yelling at me or shaking your first—no, you won't kill me—and, what's more, you won't say anything about this episode—ever! It wouldn't sound well for you. My advice to you is to meditate on what you have learned to-night about American customs, and to write Miss Coates an apology to-morrow." Ruth was cowering in one corner of the gondola.

"He's married—and he kissed me," she wailed.

"I told you"—and it was Lawrence the Magnificent who spoke—"that you ought never to go out alone with a foreigner."

"But I never felt alone when you were with me, Mr. Knightley."

She looked up at him, and Larry read recognition in her eyes. More than that—it dawned on him that she had known him all along. She had been decent enough to hold her tongue, tactful enough never to let him suspect it.

"I wasn't sure the first moment," Ruth explained. "But the ink on the reference you gave mamma was still wet—"

And Larry remembered he was only Vittorio.

"But what did you think?" he asked.

"That it was none of my business," replied Miss Coates.

Let Colonel Holt tell the sequel as he gave it to Judge Knightley:

"Well, sir, I got your cable in answer to my letter and the little snap shot I sent you; and I went around to the Coates' to look up my fine Larry. They'd been out picnicking, and the crowd was to dine with them.

"Ruth's gondola was late, and they were waiting for her and her captain. I didn't know if I'd blow the whole gaff to old Coates or let Vittorio Emmanuele Lawrence Egerton Knightley do his own explaining, when in walks Ruth and Larry after her. They didn't look as if they'd had such a bad time.

"I've come, sir, to apologize for the imposition I've practiced on you," says Larry to old Coates. He used your regular stiff, legal air, judge. I thought I heard you speaking, begad! 'I was driven to it by—pecuniary embarrassments,' says he. 'I'm Lawrence Knightley, and——' Right then I broke in. 'You'd better let me explain, young man, while you read this,' and I gave him your cable.

"So I told the whole story, and old Coates almost died laughing, and then Ruth pipes up with the tale of the gallant captain marooned on the island of the insane asylum, and we all just shouted, only Mrs. Coates said, in that mild sort of way she has: 'Poor fellow, I suppose he deserved it, but he'll catch an awful cold getting his feet wet like that!' which made us laugh more than ever. All the time, Miss Isadore was looking queer at Larry, and at last she came out: 'Well, now, Mr. Vittorio Knightley, I never told a man to his face before that he was a dear and good-looking, but I don't take back a thing I said.' She's a cool hand—that girl. I can't see what Larry saw in Ruth Coates, with that good-looking cousin on the deck. But, as I've always said, you're a stiff-necked lot, and he probably thinks he knows his own mind."

# The American Married Woman and Her Pocket Money

By Elizabeth Banks



THE American husband and his liberality, the American wife and her extravagance, are a byword among the nations of the earth.

Because a man is an American, foreigners judge that he must be open-handed in distributing money to his womankind, and because a woman is an American they take it for granted that she considers it her chief mission in life to "make the money fly."

It is true that for careless, unthinking, unreasoning liberality in the distribution of his money, especially among the women of his family, the American man stands alone and without competition.

"What! Fifteen dollars for a hat!" he says to his wife in mock horror when she approaches him in the matter of fitting out her wardrobe. "Here's twenty-five. Keep the change."

"Another new gown, my dear? But didn't you say the lavender one would be the only new one you'd need this summer? Oh, you find it's not so becoming as you thought? Well, I don't know that it is, myself. Seventy-five dollars—let me see. Yes, I can let you have it to-morrow."

The wife gets her new gown, and the husband goes without the overcoat he really needs the following winter.

Generous? Liberal? Yes, certainly—but to a fault, for he is neither sensible nor truly kind.

"John," said the wife, "I don't seem to have enough money to do the Satur-

day marketing with. I wish I had five or six dollars more."

The additional housekeeping money is forthcoming.

The old jokes concerning the Easter bonnet to buy which the wife teases the husband for money, and the husband's occasional surprised query of "What did you do with that last fifty cents I gave you?" are just as sprightly now and just as descriptive of the average monetary relations between the average American husband and wife in this enlightened twentieth century as they were in the dark ages of our Puritan ancestors. These same jokes would appear to have no point if put in English newspapers, and read by the average middle class and upper class Englishman and Englishwoman. An English married friend of mine once picked up and read of these annual American jokes which had arrived by the American mail, and when she had read it twice, she exclaimed:

"How very extraordinary! Why didn't she get her Easter hat out of her allowance?"

Upon explaining to her that the lady of the joke was not supposed to have any allowance, the Englishwoman's comment was:

"How very shocking!"

It was this same dear little Englishwoman who one day sent her parlor-maid round to me with a note saying: "Do come in at once and see my presents! I feel like an American millionairess!" When I rushed, breathlessly, into her bedroom, I found spread upon

bed and chairs two Paris gowns, lace-trimmed silk petticoats that filled my soul with envy, hand-made French *lingerie*, several pairs of silk stockings, boots and shoes of the finest and most expensive make, two new hats and a diamond pin.

"I've been to Paris," she explained. "You see, Jack had the most extraordinary bit of fortune this month. He invested some money in a mine and made several hundred pounds, so he could afford to make me all these presents. And what do you think? He says that after this year he's sure to be able to make my pin-money allowance a hundred and twenty-five instead of a hundred pounds a year!"

This young Englishwoman, belonging to what would be termed the "upper middle class," had married a young solicitor, whose income at the time of his marriage was seven hundred pounds, or \$3,500 a year. In the beginning of their engagement, they had talked over the apportioning of this income and divided it into shares—so much for house rent, so much for servants, so much for food, so much for theaters and other entertainment, so much for the husband's clothes, so much for the wife's, a certain amount of "savings" to be left in the bank, and the beginning of a provision for children, if they should have any.

One hundred pounds was to be the limit of the wife's "pin money," which allowance was to cover the amount she should spend for dressing, 'bus fares, cab fares, etc. There had never been the slightest friction in the matter of the expenditure of money. In the four years of their married life, they had added unto their family a baby, which brought also the added expense of a nurse, but, having thought of all this and begun to provide for such expenses from the very beginning, things ran as smoothly after the baby came as before. In the third year of their marriage, the husband's income was slightly increased, but, finding her allowance ample, the wife had refused an increase in her "pin money," so the increase had gone into the savings account. Occasionally,

when the husband took in an extra bit of money for extra work he was able to do, he rejoiced his wife's heart by making her a "present," in the shape of a new gown or a piece of jewelry, or the young son and heir was provided with some costly luxury not really needful, but still very pleasant to have. The wife went on with her hundred pounds allowance till came the "great bit of fortune," when all the "presents" which I have described were showered upon her, and an additional twenty-five pounds a year was insisted upon by the husband as being necessary to her position as the wife of a rising lawyer.

Perhaps the next year she would get no "presents" at all. Presents in the way of clothes came only when there was extra money which they had not previously counted upon. But she would have her one hundred and twenty-five pounds to use as she wished. In a year or so, perhaps, with added prosperity, the allowance would be increased to one hundred and fifty, or even two hundred pounds.

On the other hand, there was the possibility of the allowance being decreased. Illness, misfortune in business, a war panic, might affect the husband's income. From seven or eight hundred a year it might go down to four or five hundred. In that case one hundred pounds for "pin money" would be out of all proportion to the allowance that could be made for other expenses. Things must be discussed and readjusted. A house parlor-maid instead of a parlor-maid must be secured; the husband must give up his shilling cab to business every morning and take a 'bus; at the theater, they must sit in the balcony instead of the orchestra stalls; his majesty the Baby must wear plainer clothes, which will save in the laundry bill as well as in the cost of lace and embroidery; the husband must knock off ten or twenty pounds from his own dress allowance, and the wife must arrange her desires to meet eighty pounds a year.

It will readily be seen that in a home where the financial matters are thus adjusted there would be no need—and

certainly little use—for the wife to climb on her husband's lap and cry or caress, as the case might be, for a new Easter bonnet, while the husband would be spared the necessity of a minute calculation concerning the whereabouts of the particular two shillings which he doled out the week before.

The woman who knew she had only a certain amount of money to spend on her spring outfit would not be at all likely to wait until she had bought and had made up a lavender *crêpe-de-chine* before she discovered that it would not go with her complexion and that what she really needed was a turquoise blue.

The description I have given of one particularly happy English married couple and their sensible arrangement of the matrimonial money question is quite typical of the married woman's position in England among the better classes. That all the married women are as happy as the woman I have described, or that all the married men are as justly generous as her husband, I would not attempt to assert, but the principle upon which they govern their various expenditures is the principle that is looked upon in England as the only correct one. There are Englishmen who make their wives pitifully small dress allowances in comparison with their incomes, while there are extravagant Englishwomen who demand—and get—an amount of "pin money" out of all proportion to the smallness of their husbands' resources. Allowances do not make men generous, or their wives sensible and always just, but allowances do away with many of the annoyances to which I note my married countrywomen and their husbands are subjected.

The case, stated briefly, is this: The average married Englishwoman has an allowance for pocket money, and does not spend her life in teasing for the clothes and knickknacks she needs or wants. The average married American woman is not given an allowance. She takes what her husband gives her or what she can tease out of him. Very often it is ten times more than she has

any right to have, and frequently it is very much less.

In this respect, if in no other, the average well brought up American woman has far less of real independence than the Englishwoman of the same station in life. To this extent the Englishwoman is free and the American woman a slave, though she may be a much petted and highly pampered one.

The American woman in the ordinary walks of life who has her own separate bank account is the exception, unless she is engaged in a business of her own or had a fortune when she married. Joint bank accounts are rather more common, and these, by the way, often lead to division and divorce, besides presenting other disadvantages.

Many American married women do not know how to indorse or sign a check, and I have noted, in many instances, where the husbands have given them bank accounts, that their checks are given out signed "Mrs. John Jones" or "Mrs. Samuel Brown." I asked one Mrs. Brown why she did this. "It is incorrect and ridiculous," I said. "Why don't you sign your check Mary Smith Brown?" Her reply was that her husband insisted that if she was going to have a bank account, he was bound his name should come in somewhere!

It is in America, where our men are supposed to make the best and kindest husbands in the world, that we come most frequently upon the married woman who never has any money, but who dresses beautifully and lives extravagantly, because her husband "pays all the bills by check." It is in America that we find women whose husbands have large incomes, telling their dressmakers and milliners and grocers to send in larger bills than are really owed to them, so that they may call round afterward and collect the extra money. It is in America where we hear most frequently of business men going bankrupt, with wives ignorant of the fact that there was any need for retrenchment in expenses. It is in America that so many married men object to their wives earning a little money on their own account, believing it would reflect

on their money-earning capacities and show them to be "unmanly," while they allow those same wives to go without actual necessities because they do not like to ask for them.

To be sure, many of these same men will exclaim: "Why didn't you tell me you needed new shoes?" when they notice that toes are actually protruding from the leather.

Recently a young American girl, the daughter of well-to-do parents, who lived in another State from the one in which the girl was earning her living at typewriting, took me into her confidence concerning her engagement.

"The great trouble is that my fiancé is poor, and I'm not sure that I ought to marry a poor man."

"How poor?" I asked.

"Well," she replied, "I know he hasn't got *more* than forty-five dollars a week, and he *may* not have more than thirty-six or thirty-seven."

"Why, don't you know what his income is?" I asked, in surprise.

"No, not exactly. You see, he didn't tell me and I didn't like to ask him."

"What a funny way to get married!" I said. "It is customary for men to tell what their income is before they ask women to marry them. If they forget to tell it, they ought to be reminded. Has he got a life insurance? Suppose you should have children, as you are likely to do—haven't you talked over that contingency and thought of provision for it?"

"Why, of course not! I couldn't ask if he were insured, or he'd think I wanted him to die, and we couldn't talk about children because that would be improper!"

It was this young girl who informed me that nearly all her friends married without knowing *exactly* what their husbands' incomes were.

"Why didn't you tell me?" they ask when bankruptcy papers are served on their husbands. They think of the thousand and one things they might have done without, of the gowns that were not needed, the hats that clutter the closet, the dinner parties that might have been un-given.

For not only is it noticeable in America that comparatively few wives are put on a dress allowance. The same holds true with regard to their household expenses.

That the average American married woman has no stated allowance for pocket money is more often to be attributed to her own carelessness and sentimentality than to a disinclination on the part of her husband to give it to her. It would cost him less to "allowance her" than to be continually giving out dribblets of small or large change.

The young married man would feel a great burden rolled off his shoulders if his wife would say to him in the beginning: "I can dress well on five hundred dollars a year." Or, rather, let us say that the young engaged man would feel so if his fiancée informed him concerning her required expenditure for clothes. How should he know how much it costs for a woman to dress in the style of this particular girl, or the style she will expect after marriage? And should she not know also just what amount out of the annual income will be needed for his own wearing apparel? Certainly, the question of the allowance is one that should be settled before, not after, marriage, and then with a fortunate increase or an unfortunate decrease, changes can be sensibly adjusted.

It ought not to be necessary for a woman to first ask "Wherewithal shall I be clothed?" before saying yes or no to a man's proposal of marriage. If he has already told her his income, as he should have done when he first discovered his desire to marry her, the exact amount of the various allowances may be settled after the yes has been said.

"But all this does away with the true meaning of that beautiful part in the marriage ceremony, 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow!'" exclaims the sentimental woman.

Not at all. Rather it does away with its untruthfulness, for it is a poor sort of endowment that makes the wife a beggar and the husband—even a liberal—dispenser of alms.



# UNDER THE ROSE

By Henry C. Rowland

**M**ISS DILLON and I leaned on the steamer's rail and watched the lofty peaks of Boluela change from blue to purple and from purple to lustrous green as the swift, tropical day grew brighter. The crimson sunrise smote full in the girl's fresh face, and as she watched the changing hues on the broken rim of the great South American continent I found myself covertly admiring the nearer and, to me, far more fascinating lights and shadows as they mellowed and softened on her glowing features and the rich tints of her auburn hair.

"For about the hundredth time," said I, setting down the coffee cup which the mess boy had brought a few minutes before, "let me implore you not to land in this turbulent country; or, if you insist upon doing so, to go on to Trinidad on this vessel and take another steamer home from there."

She turned to me with a quizzical smile on her red lips.

"Do you know," she replied, "at times you tempt me to believe that you are a newspaper man yourself and are afraid that I will get a scoop."

"You are much more likely to get scooped yourself," said I, curtly. "If you knew these people as I do, you would no more think of wandering about alone in search of material here than in the cannibal islands."

She tossed her head saucily. "We writing people must go where we are sent, Mr. Mallock; besides, why shouldn't I go ashore? The country is at peace."

Considering my mission, I could not

very well tell her that if I was successful the permanent dubious peace would be but short-lived; yet the thought of her walking about alone across the trigger of that jaw trap which was gradually looming higher out of the sea as we approached, sent a chill through me which defied the growing warmth of the tropical day.

"Let me make you a proposition," said I. "If you will agree to go on with this steamer and stop over in Trinidad, I will promise within a week's time to send you a budget of information that will make your reputation as a correspondent."

She looked at me doubtfully for a moment, then slowly shook her head.

"No," she replied, with decision; "this steamer only stops a few hours and that would not give me time to go up to the capital and interview the president, which is the one thing I have been particularly instructed to do. Besides, I must get my own impressions of the place. I cannot write at second hand, as some people do."

As my personal recollections of the President of Boluela flashed across my mind, I groaned in spirit and would have given a large sum for about five minutes' personal expression of my opinion to the fatuous editor who had sent the charming woman beside me to "interview" such a debauched scoundrel as I knew President Trocas to be.

"Then, if you will insist," said I, much irritated, "I will make you still another offer, and if you refuse to accept this you can pursue your own thorny path with my blessing—and deepest sympathy. There is a north-bound steamer due here in three days,

and if you will promise to return by that, I will take you with me to call on the president and anyone else you may care to see, and will generally put you in the way of getting such information as you could never obtain by yourself."

She turned to me with a naïve smile.

"Why, to be frank," she said, "do you know, I had rather counted on your doing that for me anyway!"

"Oh, had you?" said I. "I begin to understand now why your crafty newspaper chiefs send 'sweet girl graduates' to do a man's work! There is, however, one more condition," I continued. "If you accept my offer I shall insist upon your obeying my instructions as to where and when and with whom you shall hold your interviews."

She colored slightly and seemed to hesitate.

"You are very kind," she said, finally, albeit with a slight reluctance. "I think that I will accept your offer with thanks—if you are sure that it will not inconvenience you?"

"Not in the least. It might, however, if you were to run around by yourself. As a lady and a countrywoman, I could not help feeling anxious about you—and now, if you will excuse me, I think that I will go below and take a shower and get ready to go ashore. We will be tied up to the wharf in another hour."

"This building," said I to Miss Dillon, as we whirled smartly up the drive toward the palace, "cost the country about one million dollars gold, but the price, like everything else about it, is a palpable swindle. As a matter of fact, the whole cost of construction and furnishing should be covered by two hundred thousand dollars. It is an exponent of the character of the country and its government. Now please remember that you are to obey orders strictly; in the first place, because you have promised to do so, and secondly because the country is really no place for a woman to visit unescorted."

Before she could answer we had drawn up before the entrance, and the

door of the landau was thrown open by a rather smart-looking orderly.

"His excellency is expecting you, señor, and will give you an audience immediately."

We followed him into the *patio* on our way to the audience chamber, where a moment later Trocas joined us.

"Ah, my most dear Señor Mallock!" he cried, in his provincial Spanish—for he is not a polished man. I greeted him politely, then turned to Miss Dillon.

"Your excellency," said I, "permit me to present Miss Dillon, an American lady who is traveling in search of literary material. We have come from New York on the same steamer, and, learning that I had the honor of your acquaintance, she has requested me to present her. It is her wish to learn something of the country from the lips of its chief executive."

I saw the sallow little brute's eyes light as they swept over the girl, while his speech fairly soared in high-flown expressions of welcome and delight at the honor which was done him and his insignificant country. As he talked on, a troubled look crept into the girl's blue eyes, and instinctively, as it seemed, she drew the least bit nearer to me. Nevertheless, her poise was perfect, and she thanked him in a fluent Spanish far better than his own. While we were chatting, two of the president's aides and his physician, a Dr. Madriga, entered, and his excellency ordered champagne and biscuits. As the call was simply to pay our respects and to make an appointment for my business interview, we soon arose and excused ourselves.

"Well," said I to Miss Dillon, as I was driving her back to her hotel, "how did his excellency impress you?"

I felt her give an imperceptible shudder. "He frightens me," she replied. "I—I—wish that I had taken your advice and gone on to Trinidad."

"There is nothing that you need fear," said I, "as long as you follow my instructions, which are not to leave the hotel unless I am with you. I have a business appointment with him to-morrow morning at ten, and when we have finished I have no doubt that he will

give you a few minutes while I am there."

She was silent for a while, and I turned my plans over in my mind. Suddenly she interrupted my train of thought.

"While you were talking with Dr. Madrigio the president said that he would give me an interview of an hour in the afternoon," she remarked, timidly.

"He did?" I answered, sharply. "What did you tell him?"

"I—I—said that I was very busy with an article and would be unable to make an appointment until it was finished. I—I—wanted to ask your advice."

"Then you can have it in a nutshell," I replied, quickly. "On *no* account allow yourself to be with Trocas alone! The man's unscrupulous profligacy is the talk of the whole capital."

Miss Dillon sank back into the corner of the carriage and, glancing at her, I saw that she was very pale.

"Who would ever believe that there could be such a country and such people at this epoch and in the civilized world——" she began.

"You have a great deal to learn," said I, rather severely, I am afraid, for the obstinacy with which she had disregarded my advice in the first place only emphasized her present helplessness. "To begin with, this is not the civilized world; in my opinion the tropics never *can* be civilized from the point of view of the temperate zone. This is not a white man's country; it belongs by rights to snakes, scorpions, tarantulas and niggers. The white immigrants in time take on the qualities of the aforementioned animals. In the second place, it is hardly fair to judge tropic ethics from a northern code——"

"If—if—you are going to lecture me," began Miss Dillon, in a voice which carried a suspicious quaver, "I—I—shall not ride with you another step——"

"My dear girl!" I cried, for I saw that she was on the verge of tears, "nothing could be further from my wishes. If I am disagreeable you must lay it to the crabbedness of age and ad-

versity." Really, I was fifteen years her senior, but then she could not have been more than twenty-three herself. "What I want to impress upon you," I continued, rapidly, "is the fact that you cannot do the things down here that you could in your own country. No one will interfere with you unless you do something which, according to their idea, is unbecoming a woman of your apparent caste, as certainly going about alone would be. And now we are almost at your hotel, so I will say good-evening, and if you will permit me I will call for you after dinner and we will stroll over to the plaza and listen to the band for an hour or so."

"You are very good to me," she murmured, as she gave me her hand, "and I am sure that I must be an awful nuisance!"

"You are not as long as you obey orders," I answered, with an effort to be curt, for the wistful and lonely expression of her sweet face impelled me for the instant to say more than would be entirely discreet and fitting under the circumstances. Telling her that I would call to get her at eight, I bowed and drove on to the inn where I was stopping.

"I do not think that my conversation with his excellency will last more than an hour," said I to Miss Dillon, as we drove up to the palace. "After that you can quiz him to your heart's content. He is very interesting when he chooses to be, and no doubt the knowledge that his words are to be handed down to posterity may stimulate his powers."

She looked at me doubtfully. "I am not as keen about the interview as I was before I met the president," she admitted.

"And no doubt you will be quite content to take the steamer for New York the day after to-morrow," said I.

"Yes, no doubt as glad as you will be to have me," she retorted.

"Indeed!" said I, a bit annoyed, for the tone of her remark did not seem to me in good taste. "I did not suppose that I had been quite as disagreeable as

all that. I *will* be relieved, I admit, but it is because I have your welfare very much at heart."

"Oh, please forgive me!" she cried, quickly, and laid her firm little hand impulsively upon mine. "I don't know—I can't tell you how much I appreciate all of your——"

"There, there!" I replied, repressing a strong inclination to cover the little hand with my own. "I'm a cross-grained brute, and you mustn't mind what I say. Now let's go in and have our chin-chin, and then I'll take you for a little drive in the country, which is very pretty."

We drew up before the palace and were immediately admitted. An orderly came to the reception room to say that his excellency was ready to see me, so, telling Miss Dillon to amuse herself as best she could until I returned, I followed the man to the president's private cabinet.

Trocas was in consultation with his minister of war, General Salvo, a man whom I never liked nor trusted. Both greeted me with an effusion which put me immediately upon my guard, for although a very voluble actor, your Latin is not the clever one that most people fancy. Cold, northern blood is necessary for a good diplomat.

"Señor Mallock," observed Trocas, smoothly, "we hope that you have come to tell us that the arms and ammunition have been shipped."

"I am sorry to disappoint your excellencies," I replied, "and I must add that I am surprised at your remark, as it seems to me that it was made quite plain in our communication that the shipment could not be made until the full amount of the bill had been deposited with our agent at Ragua."

"But the deposit was made a week ago, my dear Mallock," cried Trocas, quickly, "and you must know that any delay now greatly imperils our government."

"As your excellency is aware," I replied, coldly, "it was specified that the payment was to be made in gold. Now, do not let me waste your excellency's time. I have come all the way from

New York at great personal inconvenience to close up this affair, and expect to remain long enough to see that the shipment fully meets the specifications. As soon as your excellency sees fit to make the final deposit of fifty thousand dollars in gold with our agents, I will send a code dispatch, and twelve hours later you will receive the cable agreed upon—'Congratulations'—which will mean that the shipment is on its way."

"But, my dear friend," expostulated Trocas, "I can prove to you in ten minutes that it is quite impossible to draw such an amount of gold just at the present moment. Once the supplies are landed at Porto Bello, you shall receive your gold in an hour's time, and will be on your way to Ragua with the money in your possession before it is known that the draft has been made. In the meantime you will be in possession of government securities which will cover twice over the amount of this paltry bill."

"Your excellency," I replied, coldly, "we were given to understand when we filled your order that there could be absolutely no doubt concerning your holding strictly to the terms of the contract as previously agreed upon. No one has had better opportunity than yourself of seeing the changes which a week's time can make in the stability of this country's government." This was laying it on a bit strong, I will admit, as Trocas owed his unlooked-for ascendancy to a sudden piece of trickery which landed him in power before the opposition knew that he was in the field, and it was easy to see from the expression of his face that he did not enjoy my reference to it. "We are a conservative firm, and prefer losing an order to taking a risk."

To tell the truth, I was grievously disappointed. I had expected some difficulty in securing the full payment in advance, but I had counted absolutely upon getting seventy-five thousand down, and had made the trip to fight for the remaining twenty-five thousand. To secure but fifty per cent. of the sum was an unlooked-for calamity in spite

of my large experience with deals of this character.

The president controlled his anger with some difficulty.

"Of course, Señor Mallock," he began, "in consideration of our being unable to meet the payment in full, we are willing to allow you a suitable premium for the week's delay——"

"Your excellency but wastes time," I interrupted, for I did not intend to be drawn into a discussion of anything beyond the strict terms of the contract.

"As soon as the payment is made, the munitions will be shipped. Your excellency is fully acquainted with my method from a knowledge of the Colombian, Amerian and Dominican affairs. They will tell you all through these countries that I have never been known to concede one dollar from the terms of the original contract. We have cut our prices, which, when you come to consider, are in the present case ridiculously low, but the terms of payment are as immovable as one of these mountains."

A black look flashed between Trocas and Salvo; then the latter turned to me with an expression which told me immediately what was coming. Of the two, he was by far the more clever scoundrel, as he was a better judge of men and could at times employ directness from which the soul of the Latin is accustomed to recoil in horror.

"Señor Mallock," he began, quietly, "as his excellency has remarked, it is impossible at present, owing to treason in our ranks, for us to meet more than half of the deposit, which has indeed already been paid to your agents. The only thing which remains is a personal adjustment of the difficulty. The president and I are not rich men, as is commonly supposed; nevertheless, if you feel that you can assume the responsibility of cabling the order, we can find you from our own personal accounts the sum of fifteen thousand dollars in gold, which need have nothing to do with the transaction itself."

I threw myself wearily back in my chair.

"That alternative, General Salvo,"

said I, "has been suggested so frequently in my dealings in this part of the world that it has grown positively fatiguing. In fact, I cannot recall ever having discussed a deal where it has not been presented to me at some stage of the conversation, although usually, as one might say, subtly veiled and to the accompaniment of sweet, soft music. No," I concluded, a trifle impatiently; "let us be plain business men and try to put from our minds the art and science of diplomacy."

The president had been studying the ornate ceiling as we talked, and as I finished speaking he straightened up in his chair with a hopeless gesture.

"Ah, señor," he exclaimed, with a grimace, "you are a terrible man with whom to attempt to carry on business; but it is easy to see that you are not open to any reasoning, so we must simply try to discover some means of drawing the balance without precipitating affairs. By the way," he cried, suddenly, "I had quite forgotten Miss Dillon, whom I am told accompanied you. It is a pity that she should be kept waiting all of this time, especially as we must open a new discussion, which may take some time and in which we should like your counsel. I will direct one of my aides to escort her about the palace and the grounds while we are engaged, and then if there is time afterward it may be that I can give myself the pleasure of a short interview of a more agreeable character with you both."

In his usual impulsive way he excused himself, saying that he would return at once. I would have preferred that he had summoned the officer and given his directions in the cabinet, for my distrust of the man was so great that I disliked his having even five minutes' tête-à-tête with the girl. However, as there seemed no way of preventing it without a *faux pas*, I made no demur.

When he had gone I turned to Salvo. "It seems to me," said I, "that there should be no great difficulty in raising this fifty thousand dollars. It is not such an enormous sum." I threw a note of indifference into my voice, but the

remark was a trap to secure a struggling suspicion which had entered my mind; namely, that Trocas was not sure of the support of his minister of finance, without the knowledge of whom the balance of my gold could not be drawn from the treasury.

"Under ordinary circumstances there would not," he replied, and although my eyes were on the rug I did not fail to catch the swift look he shot at me, "but just at the present moment this money is needed to meet a foreign claim which must be paid at once."

It was not a very ingenious lie, and it told me exactly what I wanted to know. The payment of the foreign claims had already run overdue, postponed, no doubt, until it was decided which government of Boluela would have to pay them. Salvo should really have given me a little more credit for brains!

I changed the subject, and about fifteen minutes later, as I was beginning to get a bit nervous at his prolonged absence, Trocas returned and announced with regret that Miss Dillon had grown tired of waiting and had returned to her hotel just before he went out. I was more annoyed than I can express at this action of the girl, as it seemed to intimate a lack of consideration on my part. The president reopened the conversation, which, as I expected, was very guarded and led to nothing whatever. At the end of three-quarters of an hour of idle talk I begged to be excused.

"I am very sorry, my dear Mallock," said Trocas, as I arose to go, "that our conference should have proved so futile; however, we have not yet reached the end of our resources, and I am in hope that when you call upon us to-morrow we may have better news."

"I sincerely trust so," I replied, "but it is only fair to say that, so far as my part is concerned, there is but one way."

"Ah, we shall see, we shall see," replied Trocas, softly, as he wished me *au revoir*.

Thoroughly disgusted, I drove back to my hotel, repressing a strong desire to stop on the way and tell Miss Dil-

lon what I thought of her disobedience. Reflecting, however, that it might be wiser to first try to get in a pleasanter frame of mind, I decided to postpone that pleasure.

About four in the afternoon I ordered a carriage and drove to the hotel where the girl was stopping. On sending in my card, I was informed by the proprietor, clerk, porter and maid, that since she had driven out with me in the morning nothing had been seen or heard of the American señorita!

## II.

Scarcely able to believe my ears, but convinced of the truthfulness of the hotel people, I leaped back into my cabriolet.

"The palace! As fast as you can go!" I cried to the driver.

As we crashed over the ill-paved streets I sank back into the vehicle, for the moment cold and sick; then for the first time I realized with a swift pang that I loved the girl—loved her with a strength which for the moment obliterated all other consciousness. Perhaps it was this sudden realization which convinced me that she had been the victim of some wily conspiracy, though for the moment I did not connect it with my own affairs.

I reached the palace and demanded at once to see the president, to be told that he was taking a siesta.

"Then wake him up immediately," said I. "Tell him that I must see him."

Convinced by my manner that there must be some dire stress of necessity, the orderly, who was not the same who had been on duty in the morning, went off with my message. A moment later he returned and said that the president would see me in his chamber. I found the little reprobate in bed with a cigarette and a French novel.

"Miss Dillon has not returned," said I, ignoring all formality. "Do you know anything about her?"

His answer almost took away my breath, for I had expected the usual circumlocution.



"I regret to say that I do, Señor Mallock," he replied, eying me furtively.

The answer calmed me, for I saw at once that there was trouble ahead which might demand coolness and resource.

"I am much relieved," I replied, "and must apologize for my intrusion, which is the result of an impulse. I feel in a way responsible for the lady."

"In that case," answered the president, slowly, "it grieves me to inform you that Miss Dillon is at present under arrest on the charge of conspiracy. There were found among her belongings at the hotel sketches of the fortifications at Macuma and Ragua, also a rough plan of the military prison at Porto Bello, with voluminous notes concerning the alleged ill-treatment of prisoners confined there. She had also many rolls of camera negatives, which on being developed will no doubt prove incriminating."

I felt a cold trickle of perspiration down my chest, for I had no doubt that he spoke the truth, as the girl had been using her camera and sketch-book freely at the different ports where we had touched on the way down.

"Of course," pursued Trocas, "I have no doubt that you were in ignorance of these things, Señor Mallock; otherwise it would be my unpleasant duty to order your arrest also, which step has in fact been strongly advised by one of my counselors. I have, however, postponed the order, pending our conference tomorrow, when you will be given the opportunity of proving your good will toward the government in a manner which you are no doubt able to imagine. In the meantime you are under strictest observation."

"That is absurd!" I answered, sternly. "I don't deny that you have some hold on Miss Dillon, thanks to her poor little harmless sketches and schoolgirl observations, but let me tell you that if you try any of your scurvy, underhanded tricks on me I'll have an American man-of-war here in twenty-four hours that will blow this nigger country of yours off the face of the map before you know what's struck you. I

provided for such a contingency before I left home," I went on, savagely, for his arrest of the poor girl, which I saw at once was simply a ruse to get me in his grip, had roused every drop of the fighting blood I have in me. "Unless my firm get a cable from me in a different cipher each day at noon, by one o'clock of that same day a cruiser will leave St. Marguerite for Ragua."

I am not ashamed to say that this outburst of mine was composed purely and solely of what we Americans call "bluff." I had sent a cable in cipher at noon of the two days which I had been in the country, as no doubt the president well knew, but these dispatches had nothing to do with my personal safety. It was easy to see, however, that Trocas was impressed, for aside from a sort of low animal cunning, of which the present case was an example, he was not a brilliant man.

"Where is Miss Dillon at present?" I asked, abruptly. He gave me a look in answer that made me long to reach for his skinny throat.

"On that point, at least, I am happy to be able to reassure you, Señor Mallock," he replied, softly. "As our prison unfortunately offers no accommodations for ladies, and as Señorita Dillon is, if a conspirator, yet a most charming one, I have directed that, pending her examination, she be confined here in the palace, where she may enjoy every possible attention."

I took a few steps across the room, fighting hard with my feelings.

"Your excellency," said I, "permit me to point out to you that you are making a great mistake. Of course I understand just as well as you yourself that there is nothing dangerous nor incendiary in this young lady's little notes and sketches, which I have seen and never given two thoughts to, and which as they are now in your possession can easily be destroyed. She had planned to leave on the steamer that sails tomorrow and if you detain her let me tell you that it will cost you the sympathy of a large and powerful neighbor. Should any harm befall her"—I hesi-

tated, to give my words emphasis—"you and your country will be stamped flat!"

Trocas' face grew very pale and his black eyes flashed wickedly.

"These are strong words for a man in your position to use to a man in mine, Señor Mallock."

"They are true words," said I, "and you know it."

"True or false," he retorted, "they are just now of minor importance. Come, now," he pursued, in a friendly voice, "do not let us lose our tempers. You are a man who likes direct methods; I will be direct with you. Ah, my friend"—his voice grew playful—"you have betrayed yourself, you cannot conceal your interest in her from me. Come, then, let us be frank! You want the freedom of this lady, I the freedom of my country. If you will send in your order for the arms immediately, I will surrender her with all her drawings and pictures and rubbish. There! Did I not say that I would be frank? Of course," he went on, hastily, "I shall expect my reply by at least to-morrow noon. If it is not received by that time Señorita Dillon will be detained as a suspicious character."

I walked to the window and gazed out across the city for several minutes without speaking. I knew that my order, once given, could not be countermanded. I knew also that I had no right to give it without first receiving the balance of my payment. I had no doubt but that I would receive my securities for the balance, as these would not cost Trocas anything by the time their payment came due and my receipt for them would prevent future claims for the balance. In fact, he would prefer that I had them, as otherwise he might be compelled later on to disgorge the gold. I thought of the girl, no doubt prostrated with fear in some gloomy chamber of the great house, and, hesitating no longer, tore a leaf from my notebook and scribbled the enigmatical words which would rescue a woman, wash the land in blood and incidentally cost me my position and leave me to face the future with a smirch on

the name which for fifteen years of business dealings with unscrupulous people I had so far managed to keep clean.

Miss Dillon drew closer to me as we whirled through the gates of the palace. She was quite pale, but had borne up under the ordeal far better than I had expected.

"It was so nice of you to make them let me go at once," she murmured; "but I knew that you would come and tell them that it was all a mistake. Why, they even gave me back my pictures and notebook, and I wouldn't have lost *that* for worlds!"

"Very nice of them, I am sure," said I, dryly.

"Now that it is over," she prattled on, "it is an experience that I am very glad to have had. Fancy what copy it will make, and the president even let me take a photograph of the two soldiers who were stationed at my door. I am sure that he is not nearly so bad as you would like to have me believe." She paused and glanced at me critically. "You don't seem as pleased at having rescued me as you might be," she added, poutingly.

"I am delighted," said I, "but, to tell the truth, I am very much preoccupied about my affairs, which are rather complicated. By the way, how would you like to call upon Señor Arjolas, the minister of finance?"

"That would be delightful!" she cried. "Do you know him?"

"Yes," said I, "and he is one of the few men whom I respect in this thieving country." I leaned forward and gave the driver an address. "Now, Miss Dillon," said I, turning to the girl, "I am going to give you an opportunity to see the manufacture of a bit of history. I cannot tell you any more just now, but if you value my life and your liberty do not show any surprise at anything that you may see or hear in the next hour. I would not involve you in this affair but for the knowledge that you will not be permitted to leave here to-morrow, and if I was to wait until you were to sail on the steamer which leaves

a week later it would be too late for me to accomplish anything."

"What do you mean?" she cried, in a startled voice.

"Have patience for a few minutes longer and you will see," I answered. "I am going to call on Señor Arjolas in broad daylight, and I am taking you with me as a blind, as I think that will make it safer for both of us."

Her eyes opened very wide, but before she could answer we had drawn up before the *casa* of the minister of finance and I had sent in my card. The minister was at home, so we were ushered in, and presently he joined us.

I introduced Miss Dillon as an American lady of literary tastes, who was visiting the country and was anxious to meet some of the more prominent people and also wished to see the interior of a handsome South American residence. Arjolas, who was very much of a gentleman, expressed himself as greatly gratified, and, as I had expected, asked us to walk in the garden with him. As we withdrew from earshot of the house I said to him abruptly:

"Señor Arjolas, do not be surprised at what I am about to say. Miss Dillon is in my confidence," and with that, talking as rapidly as possible, I told him every single thing which had occurred since morning, regarding my conference with the president, the arrest of Miss Dillon and the cost at which I had rescued her. As I neared the end of my narrative I caught an expression on the girl's face which I did not dare just at that moment to fully investigate, but she did not utter a sound.

After his first start and stare of astonishment, the minister, who was an elderly man of fine appearance and a master diplomat, walked slowly up and down the path between us, indicating now and then some tree or shrub as if describing its character. As I concluded, he stroked his gray imperial for several minutes without speaking.

"Why have you told me this, Señor Mallock?" he asked, at length.

"Because," I answered, boldly, "I heard enough from those two scoundrels, Trocas and Salvo, to show me

that you are no friend of theirs, and that they are afraid of you and that they cannot raise the other fifty thousand dollars without your knowledge. I have now a proposition to make you. If you will deliver to me this balance, I will give you information as to where you can meet the freight steamer which is chartered to tranship the arms and ammunition at sea into Trocas' schooner, and will give you my written order for the goods. It will be a simple thing for you to take a vessel, meet the steamer at a point beyond that agreed upon and possess yourself of the supplies. And now," I concluded, "we have been here for fifteen minutes, which is quite as long as is consistent with the safety of any of us. If you wish to communicate with me further, you have no doubt some trusted agent through whom the affair can be arranged."

Señor Arjolas bowed without speaking and led us back to the house. A minute later we wished him good-afternoon, and, calling our carriage, proceeded back to the city.

For several minutes we drove in utter silence. For my part, I was too deep in thought to notice it, but presently, glancing at Miss Dillon, I saw that her bosom was rising and falling rapidly and that she was evidently under the stress of great emotion. The sight banished the other matters from my mind.

"My dear Miss Dillon!" I cried. "I cannot tell you——"

She touched me slightly on the arm, and, indicating the back of the driver who was perched above us, laid her finger on her lips.

"What a delightful house that is!" she exclaimed, vivaciously, "and did you ever see a more beautiful garden?"

"I was particularly anxious for you to see it," said I, "because I think that it is the finest of its kind in the suburbs of the capital. I hope that the señor did not think it was an imposition, our calling there upon so slight an acquaintance."

We continued to talk of the place, in English, but I suspected that our driver understood a good deal of that language. Whether he did or not, it was

a proper precaution, and before long we reached the hotel, where I dismissed him. We went in and walked to the further corner of the *patio*, where we were quite alone. I called for a bottle of champagne, of which I think we were both in need.

"How could you?" she murmured, in a voice which thrilled me through and through. "I would not have had you do it for anything in the world! Why, it will ruin you, will it not?"

"I hope not," I answered, cheerfully. "At any rate, whether it does or not, unless I am much mistaken it will ruin Trocas!"

She looked at me with kindling eyes, started to speak, hesitated and colored, then asked: "Was it not a very great risk to tell Señor Arjolas the whole story?"

"Only to the extent of calling upon him at all," said I, "and I do not think that we risked much there, as Trocas and Salvo have no reason to suppose that I suspect the minister of finance of being mixed up in any conspiracy; besides, you were with me, and we stayed but a few minutes, during which he showed us his plants."

"Why do you suspect him?" she demanded.

"Because I do not think that Trocas was really able to raise the fifty thousand on such short notice, which would have been easy if he had not feared Arjolas. The president is not avaricious; he was simply driven to the wall or he never would have tried to kidnap you and threaten me."

"Forgive me if I seem stupid," she said, timidly, "but if Arjolas wanted to avail himself of your offer, do you think that he would pay you the money in advance when you have just—just—"

"Just betrayed my other customers?" I asked, harshly, for the thing rankled in spite of their having first broken faith with me. "Yes," I went on, hastily, for her blue eyes were filling again; "I think he would; what is more, I think he *will*. Arjolas knows me by reputation; moreover, these people can understand revenge, and he knows that I would rather he got the arms than

Trocas. Besides," I went on, "here is the chance for him to get a hundred thousand dollars' worth of goods for just half the amount."

"And if he does," she cried, with sparkling eyes, "then you will—"

"Then I will have come out even," said I, "and, moreover, will have taught these savages a lesson in honesty and diplomacy which they will not soon forget!"

She gave me such a look that I felt it was time for me to go. In spite of my love for her, I felt that it was not right to take advantage of the conditions in which circumstances had placed us. Telling her that I would call early in the morning, I said good-night and passed out into the street, intending to walk back to my hotel.

As I neared the edge of the plaza a man with a basket of oranges placed himself directly in my path and offered his wares. As I was about to wave him aside he said: "Will the señor buy some sweet oranges?"—adding in a lower tone: "They are from the garden of Señor Arjolas."

I tossed him a coin and he handed me three oranges, one of which yielded to my touch, showing that its contents had been squeezed out. On reaching my room, I ripped it open, to find inclosed a scroll of paper on which were written the words:

Your offer will be accepted.

A.

As I was taking coffee the following morning I received a cipher dispatch from our agents in Ragua, saying that the second deposit had been made. This, of course, was the gold from Arjolas, and the knowledge that, whatever my present danger, the future at least was provided for, did much to relieve my mind. A little later there came an orderly from the palace, with the request that I wait upon his excellency as soon as possible.

I went at once to the palace, and spent half an hour with Trocas. I think that the little wretch, knowing me by reputation as well as personally, was a little frightened at his high-handed

measures of the day before and was anxious to make amends. He reiterated his promises to take up his securities and pay my balance in gold as soon as his position was assured, for which I thanked him a trifle sarcastically.

"And now, Mr. Mallock," he concluded, "you are free to leave at any time which suits your pleasure. I have already received the dispatch telling me that the arms have been shipped, and I have no doubt that the order has been properly filled. There is a freight steamer loading at Ragua for New York, and if you and Miss Dillon are in any haste I will request the captain to give you a passage."

"How soon does she expect to sail, your excellency?" I inquired.

"I am not certain; probably in three days, but I will make inquiries and let you know."

I thanked him, saying that I would consult Miss Dillon, and bowed myself out. On the steps of the palace, whom should I meet but Arjolas.

We exchanged salutations, or at least the outward and visible forms of such, in the presence of the orderly.

"I hope that you are enjoying your visit," said Arjolas, politely. "Do you find your hotel comfortable?" He gave me a meaning look. "The proprietor is a very trustworthy person."

"I always enjoy this place," said I. "The institutions are so well managed, especially the transportation and telegraph service."

I saw that he caught my meaning. He bowed as if to bid me farewell and the motion brought his face close to mine.

"The lady who arrived with you is expected to remain for some time, I believe. I hope that she will enjoy her visit. *Au revoir*, señor."

We bowed and parted, and as I rolled down the drive his last words rang ominously in my ears. "The lady—is expected—to remain—"

In a flash I saw his meaning, which was that there was a plan afoot to abduct Miss Dillon! I hastened back to my hotel, and before I had been five

minutes in my room the proprietor entered.

"Señor Mallock," he began, nervously, with a glance through the open door and down the corridor, "I have the honor to be in the confidence of Señor Arjolas, and he has appointed me as the agent to whom you may impart the information necessary for the seizure of the arms."

"Very well," said I, quietly. "I have had a hint to that effect from the señor himself." In a few words I put him in possession of all he needed to know regarding time and place, the lights to be shown over the rail of the vessel to receive the goods, and I also gave him a personal letter to our agent on the steamer, cautioning him that this paper was my death warrant should it be found before I left the country.

This business settled, I called at once upon Miss Dillon, whom I found as fresh as a flower and as cheery as if she was not sitting upon the edge of an active volcano.

"Will you walk with me in the plaza?" I asked, when I had greeted her. She saw that I had something to impart and quickly consented.

When we reached the plaza I led her to a bench well out of earshot of the scattered loungers.

"Miss Dillon," said I, as we seated ourselves, "I hope that you will forgive me for bringing you to this public place to tell you what I am about to, but we are being constantly watched, and, moreover, I have just learned from Arjolas that there is a conspiracy to abduct you!"

The color which had stolen into her cheeks at my first words fled quickly, leaving her face pale and startled.

"Do not be alarmed," said I; "or, at least, try not to be. As long as you are with me you are entirely safe. Trocas is anxious already about what he has done, and will take no more official action to detain you, but he is a man who will stop at nothing underhanded to effect a purpose."

"But—but—what shall I do?" she asked, in a fluttering voice. "Go to our consul?"

"I dislike," said I, "to leave the country while you are here, even if you were under the protection of the United States consul. What I have brought you here to tell you more particularly is this." I hesitated and the flush came creeping back to her cheeks.

"I did not know until yesterday," said I, "that I loved you as I never believed that I could love any woman; but I know it now—and know also that I can never be happy without you!"

I paused to glance at her, but all that I could see of her face was a pink little ear.

"And what I want you to do," I went on, with a bit of a quiver in my voice, "is to go with me at once to the residence of the bishop, who is a friend of mine, and let him marry us then and there!"

I waited, but still she looked away, without answering, and from the wild heaving of her bosom I was able to guess that the suddenness of my words, or some powerful emotion, had stolen her voice. One firm little hand was resting on the bench between us, and with a sudden impulse I took it gently

in my own, where it rested, the fingers nestling between mine.

"As my wife, dear," I went on, "no one would have the courage or, for that matter, the opportunity to harm you. I know that I have startled you, dear, and that it seems like taking an unfair advantage, but—if you—do not wish it so—you have only to say the word."

She turned her face swiftly to mine, and in the big blue eyes there was such a look as I had longed, but never dared hope, to see.

The day following I took my wife aboard the freighter *Sherwood Castle*, where we were most hospitably received by the captain. Trocás was completely dumfounded at the news of our wedding, and had the good sense to retire from the field of hostilities. I think he knew that to interfere with Mrs. Mallock would result in his certain death. His caution came too late for his political success, however, for now if we visit the capital of Boluella we shall be entertained by our good friend, President Armand Arjolas.

## OPHELIA

HER PORTRAIT.

IF her lips only were again  
As warm as they are fair;  
If only she would smile again  
And let us dry her hair.

Faint, faint as her dreams may be,  
Are all her once-wild fears;  
And the water—what it seems—may be  
Only her long-wept tears.

Yet though 'tis tears she floats upon,  
Is not this mist that blurs  
Our eyes and drifts its motes upon  
Our souls, some smile of hers?

Oh, to go that way to Death,  
And lose her red like this!  
Oh, to go that day to Death  
And never know his kiss!

RIDGELY TORRENCE.



# The Maid, the Aunt and the Million

A DUOLOGUE

By Alfred Sutro

**M**ISS GERTRUDE HOLLINS, an exquisitely pretty blonde, is seated, alone, in the vast drawing room of her house in Mayfair. A footman enters.

FOOTMAN—Mr. Denzil Calverstone wishes to know whether you are at home, madam.

GERTIE—Ah! Show him in, please.

*(The man retires; Miss Hollins rises rapidly, and glances into the mirror. Satisfied with her inspection, she resumes her seat, and picks up a book, which she is eagerly reading when the door opens, and the Hon. Mr. Calverstone, a tall, good-looking man, with a keen eye and a frank smile, is ushered into the room.)*

GERTIE—How are you? Sit down. What a wretched day, isn't it?

DENZIL—Vile. But I mustn't blame it, for it accounts for your being at home.

GERTIE—Yes—one really can't drive out in a gale like this. Aunt has, though.

DENZIL—Indeed?

GERTIE—She takes life very seriously—she regards it as her duty to drive out every day—

DENZIL—Admirable woman!

GERTIE—Mr. Calverstone, you must not make fun of my aunt.

DENZIL—Can you conceive me capable of such a thing!

GERTIE—I can conceive you capable—of a great many things. But aunt has been very good to me—

DENZIL—Thereby forestalling the

rest of mankind, all animated with the same intentions.

GERTIE—You, too? *(She shakes her head sorrowfully.)*

DENZIL *(puzzled)*—I beg your pardon?

GERTIE—Nothing. Go on.

DENZIL—You are cryptic to-day.

GERTIE—I had no such intention. I am merely tired. Is there a Greek word for that?

DENZIL—What did you mean by "go on"?

GERTIE—I say that to the dentist, when he hopes that he won't hurt.

DENZIL—And you think that I—

GERTIE *(blandly)*—I think nothing. I am simply waiting.

DENZIL *(with a laugh)*—What a disconcerting young lady you are!

GERTIE—People are discovering fresh qualities in me every day. Shall I break the ice, Mr. Calverstone?

DENZIL—Brrrrr! Is it as cold as that?

GERTIE—I had a letter from you this morning, acquainting me with your intention to call—

DENZIL—Yes.

GERTIE—A queer, formal, funny sort of letter—

DENZIL—Really?

GERTIE—I assure you. I showed it to aunt. "He means to propose," she said.

DENZIL—Perspicuous lady!

GERTIE—So I say—go on! Or rather—for really I like you—I will say—don't!

DENZIL *(a little crestfallen)*—Ah!

GERTIE—Yes—don't! Because I am

—oh, so tired of it all! There's no sense in it—is there now, really? I drag my wretched million behind me—and every one wants that million. You do, don't you?

DENZIL—Much can be done with a million—

GERTIE—And I go with it. We have been in London for three months, aunt and I; and in that time I have been proposed to one hundred and twenty times directly, fifty by letter, seventeen by mothers and sisters, and once by telegram.

DENZIL—Answer paid?

GERTIE—I don't know—I didn't look, and I didn't answer. Well, it *does* get monotonous, doesn't it?

DENZIL—I can conceive the repetition palling—

GERTIE—If people would only be frank, and say "Beloved million, I adore you! Be mine, magnificent fortune! Dear stocks and shares, I am so fond of you!" There would be some sense in *that*. But they pretend to be fond of *me*. You would have, wouldn't you?

DENZIL—I *am* fond of you.

GERTIE—Well, if you really are, don't propose. Let's be friends.

DENZIL—With all my heart.

GERTIE—Really?

DENZIL—Really.

GERTIE (*clapping her hands*)—Oh, that's nice! Well, prove your friendship at once. Tell me what you think of me.

DENZIL—Are you acquainted with the story of the Archbishop of Granada and his secretary?

GERTIE—Yes: the old gentleman admired the secretary's frankness, but deplored his lack of judgment. Only, I'm a good fellow, you know.

DENZIL—Well, then—here goes. You're deliciously pretty—

GERTIE (*with a warning forefinger*)—Oh!

DENZIL—Wait a bit. I'm giving the jam before the pill. As I say, you are deliciously pretty—but your education has been neglected—

GERTIE—Oh—as to that—really—

DENZIL (*laughing*)—Archbishop!

GERTIE—You're right. Go on.

DENZIL—You've been brought up in a little Yorkshire town; and you've no tastes. In literature you alternate between the severely scriptural and the feebly sentimental. Music does not appeal to you—you quote Longfellow admiringly—in fact, you don't care about Art. Now, that is a serious drawback.

GERTIE—Yes, it is—I can see that. What should I do?

DENZIL—I don't know. The obvious thing would be to recommend your marrying some one who possesses the qualities you lack, thereby becoming your complement—

GERTIE—Some one like—you?

DENZIL—Well, perhaps—more or less—

GERTIE—But why should I marry at all?

DENZIL—One advantage would be that you would receive no more proposals.

GERTIE—You know a great deal about men. Suppose I asked you to find me a husband?

DENZIL—Heaven forbid! I wouldn't even buy you a horse!

GERTIE—And yet you call yourself my friend!

DENZIL—Friendship has limits. As you say, most men would be marrying you for your million.

GERTIE—Although I am so—deliciously—pretty?

DENZIL—There are a great many pretty women—and very few millions.

GERTIE—I was so happy when I heard uncle had left me his money—and I'm not at all sure now that I don't wish he hadn't!

DENZIL—It was quite a surprise to you?

GERTIE—Quite. We knew he was well off, of course, but never imagined that he was especially rich.

DENZIL—Not even aunt?

GERTIE—No. She was his sister, you know—she lived with us, and kept house. She had no idea.

DENZIL—I can't say I'm fond of aunt.

GERTIE (*dryly*)—I'm sorry.

DENZIL—I can be frank, now that

I'm no longer a candidate—for higher honors. I suppose she'll live with you—when you marry?

GERTIE—Of course. It would break her heart to leave me.

DENZIL—H'm. I should fancy her heart was pretty tough.

GERTIE—What don't you like in her?

DENZIL—Heaps of things. For one, she encourages you to flirt.

GERTIE—Flirt! I!

DENZIL—Don't you know that you flirt?

GERTIE (*with dignity*)—Mr. Calverstone—

DENZIL—I thought you wanted me to tell you things!

GERTIE (*laughing*)—Oh, if you're still the secretary—

DENZIL—Why not? You *do* flirt. You flirted with me.

GERTIE—I did not!

DENZIL—I beg your pardon—you distinctly encouraged me to believe that you were fond of me.

GERTIE—I *am* fond of you.

DENZIL—Then why wouldn't you marry me? I'm not proposing, mind.

GERTIE—That's quite understood.

DENZIL—You haven't told me why.

GERTIE—For one thing, I don't want to marry.

DENZIL—That's no reason.

GERTIE—I'm sorry. I think it is.

DENZIL—All women should marry.

GERTIE—Even those with a million? Besides, you wouldn't have allowed aunt to live with me.

DENZIL—Certainly not. But anyhow, I'm only a friend—my proposal has been withdrawn. But you *did* flirt with me.

GERTIE—How about you?

DENZIL—Me?

GERTIE—Yes, you. You certainly pretended to care for me.

DENZIL—I did care—

GERTIE—Oh! And yet you would have allowed a mere trifle like aunt—

DENZIL—She weighs twenty stone.

GERTIE—Don't be flippant. If you had loved me—

DENZIL—I might have, in time.

GERTIE—Oh! Then you admit that you don't now?

DENZIL (*cheerfully*)—Certainly not!

GERTIE—And yet you came here with the intention of—

DENZIL—Why not? I like you quite well enough to marry you.

GERTIE—What a horrid man you are!

DENZIL—Love, my dear Gertie—we are such friends that there's no reason why I shouldn't call you Gertie—love is a very different thing from what you have read in your foolish novels. Shall I give you a little lecture on love?

GERTIE—I am resigned. It's a wet afternoon.

DENZIL—There are two kinds of love—the meteoric and the revolutionary. The meteoric has its roots in the physical, and is as ephemeral as the rainbow. The other kind, based on solid observation and substantial fact, grows as steadily as the oak, and provides shelter for one's old age. The one is a wild and fantastic thing, compounded only of passion and delirium—the other is built up of sympathy and respect—admiration, affection, knowledge. The one dies, the other endures. There.

GERTIE—And what you were prepared to offer was number two?

DENZIL—Precisely. But that is all over.

GERTIE—Of course.

DENZIL—I assure you I had already begun to think what I would do with that million!

GERTIE—Then you imagined I would accept you?

DENZIL—Naturally. From the way you had flirted with me—

GERTIE—Oh!

DENZIL—I believed I had made an impression.

GERTIE—Of the number one order?

DENZIL—Yes.

GERTIE—How modest you are! And what intentions had you?

DENZIL—As regards the million?

GERTIE—Yes.

DENZIL—At first I thought I'd give it to aunt.

GERTIE—As the price of her going away?

DENZIL—Yes. But then I reflected that she would probably do it for less.

GERTIE (*laughing*)—She might. But

I wouldn't let her. Well, what would you have done—with that million?

DENZIL—Learned how to spend it.

GERTIE—That's easy enough. I've got through a good deal.

DENZIL—In the most ridiculous fashion.

GERTIE (*really angry*) Mr. Calverstone!

DENZIL—Believe me, my dear archbishop, it's perfectly true. Of course, it's not as much your fault as aunt's—she ought to know better. You give absurdly lavish and sumptuous entertainments, keep open house for all sorts of parasites, and pour your bounty—for I know you are generous—into the laps of shameless and undeserving beggars. Don't you?

GERTIE—I thought there could be no harm in giving.

DENZIL—That's just it—that's why one needs training. Well, I've finished my lecture—I'll go.

GERTIE—Don't. Say some more.

DENZIL—I fancy I've said quite enough.

GERTIE—I should like you to tell me something about yourself.

DENZIL—Why?

GERTIE—So that I can have an innings, and play the secretary, too. Please. (*She joins her hands, and looks sweetly at him. Denzil groves restless.*)

DENZIL—My dear Gertie—I may call you Gertie, mayn't I?

GERTIE—You took it for granted, before.

DENZIL—Really? Very well, then—my dear Gertie—

GERTIE—You needn't go on repeating it, you know.

DENZIL—Of course not; of course not. As I was saying, then, my dear Gertie—

GERTIE—You don't seem able to get beyond that.

DENZIL—What an idiot I am! And it's a very ordinary name!

GERTIE—Quite.

DENZIL—You want to know about me? Well, there's not much to say. I've been fairly successful at the Bar—I mean to stand for the House at the next

general election. When I was young—you must know that I have attained the ripe age of thirty-seven—when I was young I was just the same kind of ass that most fellows are. Now I'm wise—don't you think?

GERTIE—Just a little hard, aren't you?

DENZIL—Only on the shell.

GERTIE—Inclined to be—shall we say, dictatorial?

DENZIL—A cloak for my natural timidity.

GERTIE—I should never have believed it! Selfish?

DENZIL—Can you call a man selfish who came here intending to propose? But I'll admit that there's room for improvement. You might have improved me. That's the advantage of marriage—the compensation for the sacrifice.

GERTIE—Oh! Sacrifice!

DENZIL—Does that surprise you? Do you imagine that there are any two people in this world who fit in so exactly that there are no concessions to make?

GERTIE—Aunt, I suppose, would have been a concession?

DENZIL—On your side, yes. In return, I would have renounced a whole army of second cousins.

GERTIE—And, the aunt question settled, there would have been—other—bones of contention?

DENZIL—My dear friend, let me utter a profound truth. There is no such thing as a happy marriage.

GERTIE—Oh!

DENZIL—Some marriages are less unhappy than others—there you have the position in a nutshell. Marriage isn't a picnic—it's a duel. And when the two champions, after a preliminary bout or so, learn to respect each other, and shake hands, and jog on pleasantly—why, they're about as happy as they can be.

GERTIE—That's not a romantic picture.

DENZIL—But then life isn't romantic—it's we who put the romance into it, and then grumble because it collapses.

Marriage is no more romantic than a gamble in wheat.

GERTIE—And yet you tell me I ought to marry!

DENZIL—Of course. It's progress. And that's what we're here for.

GERTIE—You're a most peculiar person.

DENZIL—If you had allowed me to propose to you—and had, let us wildly imagine, accepted me—

GERTIE—Please don't let us imagine anything so dreadful. You have persuaded me. My partner shall be the most lamblike man I can find.

DENZIL—Then you'll be desperately dull. A married woman may still be, spiritually, an old maid, if she never experiences the acute shock of the masculine intellect.

GERTIE—Like yours?

DENZIL—Let us say, like mine. At least I am progressive, ambitious and—dissatisfied. I am suspicious of the joys that money can buy. I should have dragged you out of this foolish, social circle, and made you do something.

GERTIE—What?

DENZIL—The thing you were best fitted to do.

GERTIE—But supposing I had proved to be merely of the caressing order, capable of nothing more than of simply loving my husband?

DENZIL (*with a quick look at her*)—H'm. I should have worked for two, and my supernatural energy would have galvanized you into exertion.

GERTIE—And suppose that I should have loved you so dearly that the mere loving of you filled my life?

DENZIL—Now, I call that flirting.

GERTIE—Oh, dear! Really?

DENZIL—Of course.

GERTIE—I'm so sorry! Why?

DENZIL—You conjure up images in me—you paint a picture—and I turn round and find it—gone.

GERTIE—I was only giving my idea of the—duel. I expected an avalanche of indignation and scorn.

DENZIL—You did?

GERTIE—Of course! You—who look on marriage—as a gamble in wheat!

DENZIL (*restlessly*)—Did I say that?

GERTIE—Not a moment ago! And fancy—if you gambled in wheat—with a partner who—occasionally—wanted—to kiss you!

DENZIL (*with enthusiasm*)—It would be lovely! (*He pulls himself up.*) I mean—disconcerting.

GERTIE—Wouldn't it? But go on, please.

DENZIL—I've lost my thread. Besides, I've an idea I've been talking nonsense.

GERTIE—Let me utter a profound truth—my dear friend. All clever men talk nonsense when they discuss women; and the more clever they are, the more nonsensical is the nonsense they talk.

DENZIL—I'm not sure that you're wrong. Miss Gertrude Hollins—do you love me?

GERTIE (*very demurely*)—I don't know, Mr. Denzil Calverstone.

DENZIL—I shall be obliged if you will pursue investigations in the proper quarter, and inform me of the result.

GERTIE—Certainly. And if you will be good enough to call again in seven years—

DENZIL—That's rather a long time, isn't it?

GERTIE—Are you aware of the number of miles that separates us from the dog star?

DENZIL—I'll look it up in the cyclopædia when I get home. But I fail to see the connection.

GERTIE—What was it you said before about a woman's heart?

DENZIL—I don't file my observations; and whatever it was, I do now, and by these presents, most solemnly recant.

GERTIE—Dear me! Is all the snow melting? Has Primrose Hill been masquerading as Mont Blanc?

DENZIL—All except aunt. I take back all except aunt.

GERTIE—What do you mean?

DENZIL—Gertie, I love you.

GERTIE (*nodding*)—I know. Number two.

DENZIL—Number two be—sugared! I tell you I love you. I love you just as much as I can possibly love. I be-

lieve it would be no exaggeration to use the word adore.

GERTIE—You surprise me. But, of course, as there's no such thing as a happy marriage—

DENZIL—Then you won't?

GERTIE—Didn't I tell you that, right at the start? You agreed to be friends.

DENZIL—I don't want to be friends. Friendship is absurd. I want—

GERTIE—The million?

DENZIL—The million be hanged! Give it to aunt, or the British Museum—or take it and drop it in the Thames.

GERTIE—Suppose the money belonged to aunt?

DENZIL—'Pon my soul, I wish it did! But it doesn't!

GERTIE—How do you know?

DENZIL—I looked up the will in Somerset House.

GERTIE—Oh!

DENZIL—My dear friend, I'll be frank. At the start I wanted the million—then I fell in love with you. Now that's the truth.

GERTIE—Well, you can't have us both.

DENZIL—I don't want you both. I want you.

GERTIE—Then there's aunt.

DENZIL—We give her the million! Aunt goes!

GERTIE—Never!

DENZIL—I will *not* live with aunt.

GERTIE—Although I should be there—too?

DENZIL—Well—you see—

GERTIE—You would find me—quite nice—at times.

DENZIL—Gertie!

GERTIE—Of course, I should—never—kiss you—when she was there.

DENZIL—Darling!

GERTIE—But I fancy—there would be—occasions.

DENZIL—The objection to aunt is withdrawn.

GERTIE—Unreservedly?

DENZIL—Quite. I give in.

GERTIE—Hasn't it struck you as strange that she should be out to-day?

DENZIL—You told me that she—

GERTIE—I had to invent an excuse. She wanted to leave us alone.

DENZIL—Most admirable aunt!

GERTIE—And was anxious that I should—

DENZIL—Accept me?

GERTIE—Yes.

DENZIL—We take aunt to our manly bosom.

GERTIE—Then about the million?

DENZIL—The miserable million! Look here, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll keep a bit of it as pin money for you—and with the rest of it form a trust—and build homes for the poor.

GERTIE—You mean it?

DENZIL—I do. Why should we begin our life with the burden of this monstrous wealth? I've money enough—I don't want any more.

GERTIE (*slily*)—Much can be done with a million.

DENZIL—But more with you. I want you!

GERTIE—Ah! Well, we've had quite a pleasant talk, haven't we?

DENZIL—Gertie!

GERTIE—I think you would make a very good—secretary.

DENZIL—Tell me that you love me!

GERTIE—Love you! I?

DENZIL—You surely have not been playing with me all this time?

GERTIE—Of course. What else?

DENZIL—Merely leading me on?

GERTIE—I should have thought that was sufficiently obvious.

DENZIL—Well, I am—

GERTIE—Engaged.

DENZIL—As secretary?

GERTIE—If you like. But I rather prefer your name to mine, and I think I'll take it.

DENZIL (*happily*)—Gertie!

GERTIE—You dear, foolish man! I've been meaning to marry you—for the last fortnight!

DENZIL—Then you do love me?

GERTIE—With a blend of number one and number two! Only remember, that there's no such thing as a happy—

(*He interrupts her in the usual lover's fashion; and the curtain discreetly drops.*)

CURTAIN.



# A FIRESIDE FIANCÉ

By Edna Kingsley Wallace



FOUND Johnny standing disconsolately at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Twenty-third Street, waiting for a blockade of cars to be raised. I should explain that the name on Johnny's visiting card reads Miss Johanna Morrison, but that Johnny's intense femininity made inevitable the survival of this boyish diminutive in later years because of its very piquancy of inappropriateness.

During the ninety-seven seconds which elapsed between my first perception of Johnny and my restoration to her of the five parcels she dropped in her effort to shake hands with me, my mind was engaged in juggling with certain painfully familiar questions. Should I commit the extravagance of a cab, and thus add to her comfort and my own pleasure in a quiet little visit? Or should I save the price of a cab and apply it to the wretched debt the wiping out of which should give me the right, some day, to— But she might not care, after all. And yet—

"Johnny," I said, "you are tired. I am going to take you home in a chariot."

"Oh, Peter Piper! How nice!" she exclaimed. "I *am* tired, and Electricus only knows when those wretched cars will arise and walk."

My raised hand instantly brought two contentious cabbies to the curb. Throwing an enchanting smile of dismissal to the man who had first caught my signal, Johnny moved toward the smarter of the two equipages, and, with

a direction to the victor, at whom the vanquished shook his fist, we were off uptown. Johnny piled her innumerable parcels on the seat between us.

"They are things I had to have right away," she explained. "I have some more in the pouches of my sleeves, and two thin ones tucked in my belt."

"Any in your hat?" I inquired, as one in pursuit of information.

"Why, no," she answered; "I never thought of that. Let's go back and begin over again."

"Indeed we'll not," I put in, warmly. "You are my prisoner until after we have had tea at Anatole's. I haven't seen you for ages."

"True," said Johnny, demurely; "ages. When last we met the saurians were wriggling slimly in primeval ooze."

"It is," I rejoined, patiently, "exactly four days and seventeen hours."

"Really?" wondered Johnny, opening her brown eyes very widely. I wish I could give you an idea of what Johnny's eyes and hair and mouth and chin are like, but I can't, except that they are baffling and bewitching and adorable. "Really? You must have reckoned that on your fingers."

"Count time by heart throbs," I began, foolishly.

"Hand on your heart?" she queried, with an effect of boyishness.

"Both," I answered. "My heart isn't any back number with wooden works and only one hand. And if its hands don't accomplish all my heart was cut out for—"

"Poor Peter!" murmured Johnny, with a commiserating glance. "His

heart has been cut out. Who is your happy rival, Peter? Tell Johnny."

"If its hands," I reiterated, steadily, "don't accomplish their mission I may resort to arms and bring on an engagement."

"It takes two to a—quarrel," said Johnny, looking abstractedly out of the window. Then, with a sidelong glance in my direction: "Perhaps you are tilting at windmills."

"Johnny," I begged, "did you—what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing at all," she said, hastily. "It is too absurd to get all tangled up in a jumble of words. I want my tea. I'm furiously hungry."

"We'll soon be there," I rejoined, with as much optimism as I dared to use in view of the fact that our progress up the avenue seemed to be a series of short jerks and long pauses.

"Do you know, Peter," began Johnny, looking fixedly at the horse's tail, as if hypnotized, "that man is a mere fireside companion?"

"Which man?" I asked, a little startled. When a woman swims under water for a minute you never can tell where she will come up.

"Hal Wentworth," answered Johnny, severely.

I dutifully asked why, as I was expected to do, but I was discouraged. I had not hired that cab for the pleasure of discussing Wentworth.

"Well," said Johnny, nodding her head emphatically, "he snuggles himself into the joys and comforts of every girl he knows, such as divans and Morris chairs and books and tea and people and—and everything." She stopped, breathless.

"Johnny," I interrupted, solemnly, "that accounts for it. I wondered what was the matter with the tea the other day. That wretch of a Wentworth, I dare say, had curled himself up in the teapot and had been boiled with the tea."

"Boiled tea!" exclaimed Johnny, taking issue with the minor point, as we all do upon occasion. "You have never had boiled tea out of my teapot. You

needn't make fun of me," she added, indignantly.

"And, I say, Johnny," I pursued, fatuously—I don't mind owning that I rather enjoyed her disapproval of this particular chap—"if Wentworth butts into your books you might use him for a mark—an easy mark; he is comparatively thin and flat and unobtrusive."

She gazed at me disapprovingly from under meditative, half-closed lids. "Peter," she observed, witheringly, "you had better shut yourself up and put yourself in your pocket. You cut the thread of my discourse as though you were a pair of scissors."

"I think it is not I who am cutting," I murmured, plaintively.

"As I was saying," she resumed, "that Wentworth person makes himself comfortable and tolerably agreeable, but he never does a single thing for a girl. And it isn't as if he couldn't afford to, because he can. He dresses extravagantly, and goes to see everything at the theaters. It never would occur to him to give up anything for the sake of giving anyone else a pleasure. I don't think I'm grasping, Peter, or sordid and I don't do things for my friends on the exchange system; but that man has accepted my hospitality for two years without ever making the slightest return. It isn't fair. It involves my self-respect to be the giver always—to a man."

"Let me see," I said, meditatively; "you met Wentworth to-day about a quarter before one. Was it in Broadway or Fifth Avenue?"

"Why, how did you know? Did you see us?" exclaimed Johnny, in surprise. "You told me."

"I never mentioned it. You must have seen us. Where were you?"

"Down in Broad Street," I replied.

"Why, how could you——" she began, and stopped, puzzling.

"Very simple," I returned. "I didn't."

"Then how did you know I had seen him?"

"My dear girl, you have been downtown, shopping, obviously all day. You haven't told me what a good lunch you had with so-and-so, thereby indicating

that you lunched with company you often fail to appreciate—yourself. Then, with an enthusiasm which betokens recent experience, you rail at Wentworth for never doing anything but parlor tricks; ergo, you met Wentworth at what seemed like a fortuitous moment, and he failed to ask you to go to luncheon with him. Am I right?"

"Yes, you are. Don't you think it was rather shabby?"

"He probably had an engagement," I said, mildly.

"There! You men always stand by one another!" Johnny burst forth, with something very like a snort. "He is selfish. Now, there is Frederic Wilton, for a contrast. With his family responsibilities he can't afford to spend money on one—and doesn't, to any extent—but he spends thought and effort, which are the real things, after all. He brings one a magazine now and then, or offers to do a tiresome errand, or brings a nice out-of-town man to call—that sort of thing. He spends *himself*!"—Johnny's face softened beautifully—"and grows the richer by it."

"Yes," I nodded; adding, under my breath: "If you like him for it."

"That isn't the point, Peter," said Johnny, very gently; "it is the beauty of kindliness. You know I am a beauty lover."

"I, too, am a beauty lover," I murmured, as I helped Johnny to alight at our destination, the little restaurant. Johnny succeeded in looking fairly unconscious of ulterior meanings.

We found the rooms entirely empty except for the fat dog that barked a welcome in response to our ring. Monsieur the proprietor, hearing the bell and the dog, waddled in to supply our wants and escorted us to our usual table.

"It is that you will have tea?" he inquired, bowing, his hand on his heart, his head cocked on one side, like that of an inquisitive bird.

"Yes, Anatole; that is just what it is," I answered.

"And toast, and those little, sweet cakes," chimed in Johnny.

"But yes, it is understood," bowed

Anatole. Then, waving his hand toward the wall behind me: "Mademoiselle and monsieur will observe the new postaire of Meeses Feeske." And he trotted away.

We dutifully observed the new "postaire of Mrs. Feeske," an addition to Anatole's collection since our last visit; but our interest was casual and fleeting. I was fully occupied in watching Johnny, and she was—well, probably hungry.

"Peter——" she began, and paused so long that I said: "Yes—you were saying——"

The color flushed her cheeks, and she gazed at the table. "I've been thinking," she began, and stopped once more.

"Yes, Johnny; what is it that you have been thinking? I have been thinking, too."

"Why," said she, drawing a long breath, "I'm sorry I sputtered to you about Hal Wentworth. You don't misunderstand how I feel about it? You don't suppose I measure a man merely by what he spends upon me?"

"Johnny," I replied, "look me in the eye. If you weren't so much in earnest I should say that you were insulting me in supposing me capable of thinking any such thing. Of course I understand."

"Then, Peter, I'm going to say something that has been on my mind for a long time. You——" She hesitated. "You are really doing too much—too many nice things for me. Truly, you mustn't." Johnny was looking very serious by this time. "I beg your pardon if speaking of it annoys you, but I can't help it. You don't mind?" And Johnny raised pleading brown eyes to mine.

"Johnny," I said, as steadily as I was able, "I suppose we may as well have it out here, though we could have chosen a more appropriate spot. It has been my happiness to give you little pleasures because—because I love you, dear. You must have understood that. Sometimes I have thought you cared, and then, at other times, I have despaired."

"Stupid man!" murmured Johnny.

"I suppose so," I said, doggedly; "but

you have been nice to me sometimes. How was I to know? And I have said to myself: 'I will make her care.' But, Johnny, I have no earthly right to try to make you care until I have paid off an inherited debt with which I have done little, so far, except to keep up the interest. Again and again I have debated whether it were worth while to deny myself the pleasure of doing little things for you, and thus bring myself nearer to the right to ask you whether you would help me live my life. Of course, if you cared, Johnny——"

I had been staring at the table, but glanced up in time to surprise a look in her eyes that set my pulses bounding.

"Peter," she said, "you are far and away the stupidest man of my acquaintance. Moreover, you are frightfully extravagant, and you haven't loved me enough."

"I know I'm stupid, and perhaps extravagant," I rejoined, indignantly; "but as for not loving you enough——"

"There! I told you you were stupid. You don't in the least understand what I mean."

"Please be categorical," I begged.

"Two lumps, or three?" asked Johnny.

"Not any, thank you," I answered, abstractedly.

"Why, Peter Ten Eyck!" she gasped. "No sugar?"

"Give 'em to me in the saucer, and I'll fire 'em at Anatole. What is the old fool hanging round for? Please tell me what you mean."

"Well," she said, judiciously, stirring her tea and thrusting her chin into the hollow of her unoccupied hand, "you are stupid because you don't see reasonably obvious things; for instance"——here she gave me the briefest of fleeting glances——"that I do care."

"Johnny," I breathed, and rose to my feet involuntarily.

"Sit down!" she commanded. "I haven't finished. As I said before, you are stupid because you haven't seen that your extravagance has been really selfish." She paused.

"Excuse me, Johnny," I said, "I can't stand this. Wait a minute." And

I walked over to Anatole. I said things to him. He nodded with an ecstatic smile, and withdrew to the nether regions. An appeal to a Frenchman's gallantry is never in vain. I returned to Johnny. I did not resume my seat opposite, but drew my chair to her side and took her unresisting hands in mine.

"Now, Johnny," I said.

"You have treated me like a little child, Peter," she went on; "and when I declined things because I couldn't let you do so much you misunderstood and were hurt. And yet I couldn't say anything——until to-day; and then"——she grew serious——"I couldn't *not*, because I had got myself into such a horrid mess, such a false position, as far as you were concerned, in talking about Hal. You need some one, Peter, to *make* you economize."

She stopped, and I embraced my opportunity. When my opportunity had recovered a little she said, with that adorable touch of motherliness inevitable in women when they undertake some chap's regeneration: "You see, dear, you didn't trust me enough. Don't you know that even if I had not loved you——you old dear!——even then I should rather have had you just than lavish? You have been beautifully thoughtful of me——exquisitely fit in your appeals to my taste; and Peter, dear, I have loved you, not *for* it, but *in* it. But, after all," and here the look in her eyes caused me to bow my head, "I love you so much, dear, that you must be *right*, first of all."

"Then, Johnny," I asked, humbly, "you wish me to be a horrid economical fireside fiancé?"

"I think," she said, pondering, with a tantalizing gleam, "that I shall just love you in the rôle."

And before I could put an end to her talking, by the surest means, she added: "You see, saving money to spend on one's self would be a sort of parsimony; but saving it for ultimate spending on some one else——"

She dimpled.

"——will be matrimony," I suggested.

"By our ain fireside," answered Johnny, softly.

# SOME DRAMATIC EXTREMES

By Alan Dale

"Leah Kleschna," a popular hit. Mantell's classical repertoire. "A Winter's Tale," a delightfully artistic production. Lillian Russell, perennially young and lovely returns to her first love—the Casino. Comic opera an odd garb for "The School for Scandal." ❧ ❧



YOU may place a large red star upon the season's record opposite the name of Mrs. Fiske, at the Manhattan Theater. You may pour healing oil upon particularly troubled waters. You may rejoice at the fact that a typical American actress has achieved complete success in a play by an American author, right in the very midst of the drooling, driveling inanities of the Broadway hodge-podge. When you have done these pleasurable things, you may look closer and find even keener cause for satisfaction.

You may discover an especial measure of gratification in the circumstance that it was Mrs. Fiske to whom this success came, for the fates were menacing, and it looked almost as though untoward events would drive her to the wall. Condemned to remain in New York, owing to the fact that throughout the country all the "first-class" theaters have been "barred" to her, Mrs. Fiske was confronted by the difficult task of keeping herself and her company, indefinitely, at her husband's playhouse. Mr. Fiske himself, disabled by illness, was comparatively "out of the combat." Upon the shoulders of this audacious little actress, there fell a burden at which the stoutest might have quailed.

It was New York or it was nothing. However, there was no surrender for Mrs. Fiske. She had, at any rate, the courage of her convictions. Weak-

kneed, stamina-lacking, vacillating the average actor and actress most assuredly are, but, fortunately for the better stage, there are one or two exceptions. With Mrs. Leslie Carter and Mrs. Fiske fighting for the chance to do the right thing at the right time, the stage is in no particular danger, as far as New York is concerned. And if my out-of-town readers will suffer from the fact that these leading American actresses will be unable to present themselves properly outside of Manhattan—well, it rests upon the spirit of the out-of-town critics to fight their own battles. One city at a time is all that yours obediently can satisfactorily undertake. When the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet went to the mountain. Mr. Belasco and Mr. Fiske may yet have to run trains from the out-of-towns, to the Belasco and Manhattan Theaters.

Mrs. Fiske's new play was from the pen of C. M. S. McClellan, and it was called "Leah Kleschna." Prophets were dubious. Mr. McClellan had to his credit "The Belle of New York," "The Girl From Up There," and "Glittering Gloria," a trinity of trivialities that augured ill for the venture of an actress addicted to the gloomy sex plays of Ibsen and of Sudermann. However, Mr. McClellan was once upon a time a successful New York journalist, with a bitter pen, a pessimistic outlook, and the pose of the misunderstood. He went abroad, avowing his hatred for Broad-

way, and lived in London. But by one of those ironies that are inexplicable it is his detested Broadway that has taken him up. London, that he loves with the Anglomaniac's fervor, declined—so it is reported—to present "Leah Kleschna," and Mr. McClellan, who would probably have willed it otherwise, has become a prophet in his own country.

No other actress but Mrs. Fiske could successfully have played *Leah Kleschna*. It is not even what is called a "star" part. Then again, while it deals with feminine frailty, it is not the frailty of sex. We have grown to believe, through the one-sided playwrights, that a woman can sin in no other way than through the love instinct.

Fatiguing "problem" plays have palled upon us, and the "woman with a past" has degenerated into a veritable bugbear. As though there were nothing else in life but sex! The Frenchman may affect to believe it, but the healthy American or English mind must reject such an insensate and unwarrantable theory. While assuredly it is "love that makes the world go round," we are not squirrels in a circular cage, condemned to the perpetuity of a tiresome circle—the symbol of eternity. There are other things; there are side issues; we may pause occasionally in our maddening whirl.

Mrs. Fiske, of course, has got to have freckles of some sort. She is not the kind of actress who can turn to us a blithe and smiling face and ask us to revel in the mere joy of living. *Tess*, *Becky Sharp* and *Hedda Gabler* gave her every chance to wear the moral freckles that the average playwright sanctions. In "Leah Kleschna" she wore another brand, and dared to appear as one of the "light-fingered" sisters who annex the material belongings of their neighbors. We call that sort of lady sordid. The woman who steals her friend's purse is considered vulgar; the siren who purloins her neighbor's husband is dubbed interesting. The seventh and eighth commandments are miles apart in the minds of the populace.

The theme of "Leah Kleschna" is the regeneration through legitimate love of a woman thief—the associate of desperate criminals. Although the Manhattan Theater program made highfalutin allusions to criminology, and seemed to suggest Lombroso, the play is really nothing more than a "popular" drama, with all the inconsistency that a "popular" drama demands. *Leah* never seems to be a very desperate case. She rarely suggests that even a Dr. Spitzka would be excessively interested in her cerebral outfit. She is just a dramatic figure, salient through various vital acts, and always indicating the final regeneration.

In fact, "Leah Kleschna" is a popular success, that seems almost uncanny in the persistently dark green atmosphere of the Manhattan Theater. At this moment of writing, it is doing that dreadfully coarse thing known as "turning 'em away." (I blush to mention anything so common, though by no means commonplace.) It will supply Mrs. Fiske with that odious necessity generally known as "filthy lucre." Her artistic soul may rebel at this, even while her material flesh may rejoice.

There is one splendid, moving scene in "Leah Kleschna." A daring robbery has been arranged. The man whom *Leah* has begun to love is the man whom *Leah's* father has planned that she shall burglariously attack. The lights are low as she steals into *Paul Sylvaïne's* rooms. He is there—in the dark. He knows that the surreptitious visitor is a woman. She is a dangerous woman, willing to run the whole gamut of crime. If he gives any alarm, she tells him, it will be easy for her to assert that she is visiting his rooms at his own invitation. And then—scandal, for he is a statesman, an eminent figure.

At the crucial moment, he snaps the electric button and floods the room with light, and she sees—*Paul Sylvaïne*. To him she confesses all her sad story, and from that point on her salvation works. She even becomes one of those stagey stage-martyrs, willing and anxious to suffer for somebody else's crime. The



diamonds have been appropriated by *Paul Sylva*'s rowdy brother-in-law-elect, but *Leah* is perfectly willing to be arrested.

Of course this is quite cheap and "popular." The veriest tyro may see through it, and smile cynically at the gallant talk of "criminology." It is mere theater-ology—stage-ology—but it is well done. It is not always necessary to condemn the stage because it is the stage. Assuredly the "stagey" irritates when it is clumsily put forward. But it is quite possible to be "stagey" and compelling. "*Leah Kleschna*" is that. The final "illumination" of *Leah* is quite effective, and a marvelously beautiful last scene gratifies the artistic eye.

Mrs. Fiske herself deserves immense credit. She played *Leah* with fewer mannerisms, although there is still room for improvement. This actress refuses to rise to a climax. You are wrought up and excited at a situation; you wait for the final uplifting, and lo! Mrs. Fiske lets you fall with a thud! She wet-blankets your fervor, and I believe that she calls it—repressed acting. I am very fond of repressed acting, but there is a limit to all things. The actresses who indulge in it to excess are generally those who lack the power of rampant emotionalism. That is the difference between Mrs. Fiske and Mrs. Leslie Carter. With the latter, you rise to the very skies of emotion; with the former, you sink to the abysmal depths of repression.

This repression is like wearing an elastic band round your waist, when you are fearfully hungry and there is a groaning table of delicacies awaiting consumption. It is the mortification of the dramatic spirit. It is the asceticism of the emotions.

In spite of which, this notable feature of the season must be starred in every shade of scarlet. The acting throughout was capital; the stage management, less worthy. John Mason, who rarely suggests the gentleman of polish, managed to do so on this occasion, while Charles Cartwright, a newcomer from London, gave a splendid

performance. So did Mr. William B. Mack. "*Leah Kleschna*," in a dramatic wriggle of the ten commandments, moved up one peg, from the seventh to the eighth. The drama has hung upon the seventh for too long. It has almost exhausted its possibilities. "Thou shalt not steal," the imperativeness of which is usually emphasized at the police courts, may look for temporary expression at the theater, when that expression is as satisfactorily supplied as it is in "*Leah Kleschna*" at the Manhattan.

Do not put away your red stars just yet. Place them again by the side of Mr. Robert Mantell, an actor almost new to New York, but eminently and deservedly popular outside. It's an ill wind, etc., etc. Mr. Mantell came to the Princess Theater to fill some sort of a gap. He left a larger one when he departed after three virile, impressive, artistic revivals, and a chorus of praise for his admirable work in "*Richard III.*," "*Othello*" and "*Richelieu*," plays constituting the managerial bugbear usually alluded to as the classic repertoire. Imagine a classic repertoire in this era of cheap topical songs and pusillanimous musical comedy!

That Mr. Mantell, blown in upon us by that alleged ill wind from the arid wastes of the "road," suddenly awakened New York to the truth that there is such a thing as the "art" of acting, is a certain fact that none will gainsay. The drawing-room palaverer, the strutter in cheap and maudlin romance, the "dress-suit" milksop, and the declamatory, machine-made *poseur* of so-called schools were confronted with the irresistible, poignant charm of real acting. You heard people in the audience at the coy little Princess Theater speaking dreamily and wistfully of Booth and other memorable great ones. There was an intellectual influence in the air. With his voice of matchless beauty, his exquisite cadenzas of eloquence, and a dominant presence that the little rush-light "stars" of to-day might covet from the depths of their much advertised "personalities," Robert B. Mantell charmed every lover of those qualities the loss of which have made of acting a

mere trade, to which the tinker might aspire successfully.

It was years since I had seen a presentation of "Richard III." May I admit that I had almost forgotten the possibilities of the play? I scrambled into the Princess one cold and depressing afternoon to see this tragedy, in one of those moods that make of the theater something of a tribulation. Duty called me there, and—well, duty is very satisfactory, but not always hilariously enjoyable. As I sat through this performance, duty was forgotten, and a sensation of keen pleasure kept me rooted to my chair in that little playhouse. I saw a psychological study, cleverly conceived, excellently executed, and my artistic soul rejoiced and was glad.

I saw a scenic equipment that was so ludicrous that it saddened. Extremes met. The poverty, the threadbare quality, the misery of this scenic environment, in the midst of the flatulent opulence of metropolitan productions, made one gasp. The actor triumphed over it all. The squalor of his surroundings was soon forgotten in the magnetism of his work. Even the mediocrity of his company, made up of actors lacking all illumination, was powerless to affect his success. You can be quite sure that I saw Mr. Mantell again, and with delight, in his subsequent revivals of "Othello" and "Richelieu."

Is there any other actor who could have scored against such terrific odds? Think, and name one, if you can. Do I hear you say Mansfield? If so, I must respectfully beg to disagree. Mansfield, in the throes of a mildewed repertoire, hedged in by a dense jungle of mannerisms, with a diction like a train of unexpected explosions, is to Mantell as "water unto wine." There was a "tide in the affairs of men" for Richard Mansfield, but he failed to take it at the "flood." Compare his policy with that of Mantell, who in a particularly pestilential dramatic moment invites critical comment upon a classic series of plays, without scenery, whereas Mansfield elects to appear at the very theater from which non-intimidated

critics are deliberately "barred." Think of Mantell in the frivolity of a wintry metropolis, without actors, without heraldry, opening his arms to the whole avalanche of criticism, and of the richer, materially luckier Mansfield hiding behind the half-open doors of a playhouse that says to the independent critic: "You can't come in." A confession of weakness, you say? I add: a megaphonic announcement of dire debility.

One of those instantaneous, rapid-transit failures from which criticism can lean back and take a holiday was that of "A Wife Without a Smile" at the Criterion Theater. Were it not that the author thereof happened to be the much-lauded Arthur Wing Pinero of London-town, one could consign this play to the potter's field of the drama, with no stone to mark its last resting place. But success has its penalties. Somebody has said that success is the last step before the descent. As long as the crags still tower above, the playwright, the actor, the artist may look up and see his lucky stars. But from the dizzy altitude of the "top" there is, alas! the saddening spectacle of the precipice below.

"A Wife Without a Smile" landed Arthur Wing Pinero in the ugliest abyss. The play in London—permitted by that Gilbertian institution known as the "censor," whose mission is so clearly to non-cense that nobody will object to my calling him the "nonsenser"—achieved much notoriety by a feature that was labeled "erotic." It is not necessary, at this late stage, to allude to the low, smoking-room story of the dancing doll, which gave an impetus to this particularly incoherent, silly farce. Mr. Charles Frohman deleted this objectionable episode from the production at the Criterion Theater. Nothing remained. Pinero, robbed of nasty suggestion, was a gaunt and mournful skeleton. The novice offering to managerial consideration such an invertebrate piece of inanity as "A Wife Without a Smile" would have been waste-paper-basketed with remarkable and unswerving alacrity.

The only wonder was that Pinero, who has worked hard and worthily to build up a name, should have been willing to jeopardize his reputation in this manner. It appears that in London "strong influence" was brought to bear upon the repression of this farce. Here, it was the box office that caused its speedy demise. Is there any stronger influence? The foolish policy of playing practical jokes upon the public—of giving hard-working playgoers a stone when they are clamoring for bread—was instanced in this case, as it was in the case of J. M. Barrie and "Little Mary."

The only cheerful, exhilarating, mirth-inspiring outcome of "A Wife Without a Smile" was the charming, sycophantic attitude of certain Pinero admirers. These undiluted gentlemen tried to read meanings into this tupenny-ha'penny farce, and treated it with the lovely dignity of "symbolism." It was quite too screamingly funny. Had the author been John Jones, you can imagine an amount of silent contempt, so silent that it would have made a noise. But "symbolism" covered the case. It is unnecessary to remark that everything can be symbolic of anything, with a little clever jugglery. Also, that the symbolic generally calls for the car-bolic.

From the wreck of "A Wife Without a Smile" two actresses escaped with their lives. These were Miss Elsie de Wolfe and Miss Margaret Illington. The work of both these ladies, in a dis-creditable play, was most creditable. Fortunately, the life belts were in good condition, and two dramatic reputations lived to tell the harrowing survivors' tale.

Poor Miss Annie Russell came into the season's thick badly equipped with a four-act comedy called "Brother Jacques," by Henry Bernstein and Pierre Veber, presented at the Garrick Theater. This was an adaptation, or a translation, or a something-or-other, and it is not at all necessary to seek a classification for it. Why anybody took the trouble to bring "Brother Jacques" from Paris, when the poor, debilitated

thing could ill afford to brave the Atlantic Ocean in winter (or in summer, for the matter of that) was not explained on the program.

It should have been explained. It would have made interesting reading between the acts, and even during the acts. Condensed into a "curtain raiser," "Brother Jacques" would have been a worthy trifle, for it had one amusing act that stood by itself. In fact, what Miss Carolyn Wells would call "much bad, much pad, and much ad." were striking features of the Garrick play. Its one entertaining act dealt with a French "marriage of convenience." Bride and bridegroom are alone after the marriage ceremony. She "loves another"; so does he. How to render the marriage null and void, is the problem confronting them.

After much discussion, and a realization of their other loves, she suggests desertion as the only way out of the difficulty. The sooner the better, for the wedding guests are still in the house. Both bride and bridegroom, being members of the genus idiot, usually met with on the stage, the affair is easy. She helps him on with his hat and coat, he jumps from the window bound for his charming *Louissette*, she calls in the wedding guests as witnesses, tells them of the perfidy of her newly-made husband, and falls into picturesque hysterics as the curtain drops. All this occurs in one act; the rest is chaos.

The more you consider it, the more you may wonder at the importation of "Brother Jacques." The only reason that I can discover is that the heroine's name happened to be *Geneviève*, a baptismal that lends itself to the conspiracy of mispronunciation in which American actors league themselves against the French language. They called her *John-viève* throughout. American actors and managers love to insult the French language when it isn't there to defend itself. This is a sort of uncanny mania, but it is funny only as indulged in by Miss Marie Dressler at Mr. Joseph Weber's Music Hall.

Annie Russell herself was very charming in "Brother Jacques." I hope

that she won't mind being called charming. I cannot allude to her as thrillingly emotional, which I am convinced that she would infinitely prefer. "Brother Jacques" precluded this, just as much as Miss Russell's own temperament would probably do. Let her rejoice at the fact that she managed to charm in a play that needed a strenuous pair of crutches.

Miss Viola Allen's offering at the Knickerbocker Theater was nothing less than "A Winter's Tale," that Mr. Shakespeare is said to have written. Miss Allen, battledored between such opposite forces as the Messrs. William Shakespeare and Hall Caine, might have been "winded" by the energy of such an acrobatic game. There is a whole landscape between Stratford-on-Avon and the Isle of Man. This might have perplexed a less enterprising lady.

"A Winter's Tale" is seldom played, and I don't know why. It offers magnificent opportunities for both acting and scenic accessory. Before her incursion into the maudlin melodramatic realm of "The Eternal City," Miss Allen is reported to have visited Mr. Hall Caine in his island home, for points and accuracy of presentation. Debarred by circumstances over which she had no control, from treating Mr. William Shakespeare in a similarly effusive and social manner, the actress had to rely upon tradition and her well-read business manager, Mr. Frank J. Wiltach. The result was eminently satisfactory, and there was no ocean to cross.

It was an artistic, delightful production, breathing a fragrant atmosphere of poetry, and making of Shakespeare a genuine pleasure. It was the occasion for numberless cranks to spring elastically up and cry out against omissions and condensations. The funny thing about Shakespearian productions is that if you "cut" the plays, the cranks denounce you, and if you don't "cut" them, the public does the denouncing. It is impossible to do the absolutely right thing.

Miss Viola Allen, however, can rest upon the certain fact that whenever she produces Shakespeare poetically and ar-

tistically—as she has done in this "Winter's Tale"—in a manner that emphasizes the beauty of the poet, as he would assuredly have rejoiced to be emphasized, she will be doing a worthy and desirable thing, worthily and desirably. As a production, this attraction would have done credit to a producer with more opulent resources at his command than this actress possesses.

The thankless cry of too much scenery was ludicrous and unpardonable. Here, at any rate, was a painstaking, admirable effort to uphold the dignity of the "higher drama." A few of those who persistently whine for "higher drama," but who don't know what it is when it is set before their very noses, tried hard to belittle Miss Allen's enterprise. These gentlemen, who confidently look forward to Heaven, will probably fail to recognize it if they ever get there. For them, there is the Hades of Tantalus, forever yearning to drink, but perpetually unable to quench a horrible, lifelong thirst.

In this production of "A Winter's Tale" there was a certain dignified simplicity that awoke commendation. There was the beauty of the sylvan glade in which Miss Allen, forgetting the manacles of Hall Caine's fettering heroics, danced with a grace and lissomeness that *Perdita* probably could never have owned. Even that incensed the tradition-mongers. They spoke of Mary Anderson's dance. If Mary Anderson had been there, they would have gone back twenty years to speak of somebody else. Although I have no whiskers, and my photographer always tells me that I'm nowhere near my prime (you remember what they say in "The Duke of Killcrankie" on the subject of the prime: "The prime of life is exactly five years ahead of whatever you are"), I will make the damaging confession that I saw Mary Anderson in "A Winter's Tale" in New York City. I could detect very little difference between the joy of Miss Anderson's dance and the grace of Miss Allen's.

Isn't it a bit hard on Shakespeare when critics have to recall his plays,

not by the beauty of their presentation or the value of the acting, but by a sylvan jig introduced by a leading actress? Perhaps if *Juliet* sang a song, *Rosalind* turned a somersault, or *Beatrice* interpolated some imitations, we should get some splendidly educational, instructive comments on "Romeo and Juliet," "As You Like It" and "Much Ado About Nothing."

Although handicapped by elocutionary limitations, and a stiffness that never seems to come out in the wash, Miss Allen, in the dual rôle of *Hermione* and *Perdita* deserves sincere praise for a plucky, courageous venture. Her company included Miss Zeffie Tilbury, who can always be relied upon; Boyd Putnam, Henry Jewett and Frank Currier. For those who feel that Shakespeare was slighted, there are always the memories of the beautiful symbolism of "A Wife Without a Smile."

Miss Lillian Russell has returned to her first love. Please don't mistake my meaning. I refer, of course, to the Casino, from which Miss Russell's divorce has been annulled, with due publicity. To this first love (*on revient toujours!*) she brought a comic opera, built upon "The School for Scandal" and called "Lady Teazle." It served to prove that while many stories may be old, even including that of *Lady Teazle* herself, Miss Russell remains the youngest and most beautiful story on the stage. There we saw her, on the very boards where years and years ago we used to admire her physical perfection, more dazzlingly lovely than ever, with the ingenuous look of youth in her eyes, and added graces of form and demeanor. Some of us rubbed our eyes in amaze. It did us good. After all, were we mistaken in our own years?

It may not be the mission of the critic to descant upon feminine loveliness. But as the mission of the critic is by no means clear, except as a target to be riddled by the arrows of the ego-mani-

acs who ask him to come and see them, as they see themselves—there is no particular reason why the artistic topic of material beauty should be excluded from their range.

It was Miss Lillian Russell as a picture of overweening youth who gave "Lady Teazle" its filip. The comic opera itself, arranged by the Messrs. Bangs and Penfield, with music by A. Baldwin Sloane, was a worthy attempt at repression rather than of expression. The gentlemen who took upon themselves the rather thankless task of dallying with the memory of Sheridan were careful to give no offense to an author who can ask for no "royalties" for the use of his ideas, and cannot write to the papers on the subject of infringement without the necessary "arrangement with the publishers."

It certainly did seem odd to see "The School for Scandal" in this garb. But to my mind it is also odd to view "Hamlet" and "Romeo and Juliet" at the Metropolitan Opera House. In the famous Sheridan screen scene, the joy of every amateur actress, you heard *Lady Teazle* warbling a little French chansonette, while *Sir Peter* failed to recognize her voice. Then again, you noted the incongruous fact that *Charles Surface* sold his ancestral pictures in song. In fact, all sorts of song filtered through "The School for Scandal," and it was a long time before you could get quite accustomed to the strangeness of the thing.

Oddly enough, Miss Lillian Russell acted *Lady Teazle* far better than various "legitimate" actresses, whom I could name, have managed to do. Vocally, she was painful. Her voice has not mellowed. It was ragged and reproachful. But in the marvelous picture of sheer and exquisite youth, Lillian Russell accomplished her object. The women wondered; the men gasped; the box office tinkled. Was this not enough?

# FOR BOOK LOVERS

By Archibald Lowery Sessions

How the setting of a novel is selected. The background of South America in fiction. Joseph Conrad's "Nostromo." O. Henry's "Cabbages and Kings." Other suggestive books. ❁ ❁ ❁

**I**F a novel is thoroughly good, as respects its workmanship, its background, the scene of its action, is a matter of minor importance as a rule. Its merit depends upon the manner in which the characters are depicted, the combination of circumstances, the concentration of the action to a logical climax, and literary style, rather than upon the locality of the story.

Nevertheless, this consideration is a matter of some interest; and speculation as to why a particular author in any given instance has been led to select the background that he uses is not altogether vain, for sometimes it throws light upon what are frequently referred to as tendencies in fiction.

It is to be presumed, of course, that, in the majority of cases, the choice is made because of the author's familiarity with the subject. And it is beyond question that the best and greatest novels owe their existence to this fact. Knowledge of the facts, combined with a sympathetic insight and literary gifts, is certain to produce great results. Instances might easily be multiplied in support of this if space permitted and proof were needed. It is obvious enough, and if the great names of Hawthorne, Thackeray, Dickens and George Eliot are to be mentioned, it is only by way of connecting fact with personalities. The Italian romances of Craw-

ford, the Kentucky tales of John Fox, Jr., and the pictures of Manx life by Hall Caine are illustrations of more contemporary interest.

It is not infrequently the case that an author deliberately specializes by an actual course of study of a certain period or the conditions of a certain locality or a phase of life. Historical novels are, of course, the most familiar examples of this, and to them may be added such books as the Zenda stories of Anthony Hope, Stewart Edward White's tales of the wilderness, Jack London's descriptions of primitive habits and instincts, and the work of David Graham Phillips in the commercial and industrial field of fiction.

How much does this question of background have to do with a book's commercial success? How far are authors influenced in their selections by this consideration? The matter of motives is rather too subtle a subject to discuss with safety, but surface indications often point to the suggestion, if not the conclusion, that questions of art have less weight than those of royalties. Timely novels, so-called, are most likely to suffer from this suspicion, for they undoubtedly do, to a greater or less extent, profit by the concentration of public attention on some special topic.

Is it because of this that stories with a South American setting are so few, relatively? There is no place under the sun so rich in material as South America. From the time of Cortez and Pi-



zarro the history of the continent has been crammed to overflowing with romantic and dramatic episodes. Prescott's histories of the conquest of Mexico and Peru have a more profoundly thrilling interest than any novel that ever was written.

The struggles which in the first half of the nineteenth century resulted in the liberation of the Spanish colonies and produced such heroic figures as Bolivar, Miranda and Santander, and even tyrants of the type of Rosas, offer, it seems to us, extraordinary opportunities to the novelist who can write of such things with a comprehending sympathy.

Even the physical aspects of the country, upon which it is not necessary to dilate, are full of inspiration.

It may, of course, be objected that all these things are suggestive chiefly for fiction of superficial type of adventure. But everything depends upon the method of handling. The material is there, and South America is still waiting for her Scott.



"Nostromo, a Tale of the Seaboard," is Joseph Conrad's contribution to South American fiction. It is published by Harpers.

It is thoroughly characteristic of Conrad, emphasizing, even unduly, some of his peculiarities. The story is told with the same deliberation that marked "Romance"; indeed, it is even a little exaggerated by the almost exasperating reiteration of the beginning of his narrative. Most people experience a feeling of relief when they succeed in getting any sort of an undertaking fairly under way, whether it is in the writing or only the reading of a story, but upon Mr. Conrad the effort of making a start seems to exercise an irresistible fascination.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful if he could write a really poor story to save his life, and "Nostromo" is well up to his standard. It may be that it has some structural defects that were wanting, or at least not so apparent, in "Romance," but it will, we are sure, make as deep an

impression. He has handled his scenery with tremendous effectiveness, as, indeed, he always does. His description of the weird impressions produced by the almost human individuality of the gulf at Sulaco is very suggestive to readers of "Heart of Darkness" and "Romance," who will find themselves again surrounded by an atmosphere that seems full of mysterious whispering voices.

The characterization is done with his accustomed subtlety, which is of the kind that produces its effects almost without either effort or consciousness on the reader's part. The picture grows little by little until suddenly one is aware that he is looking at a finished portrait.

The plot is one that might be called symbolic by one who is on the lookout for a novel with a purpose; though one who loves a good story for its own sake would be reluctant so to classify this one. It includes the political revolution, inevitable in any account of South American doings, combining it with the steadying influence of Anglo-Saxon mining interests.

If one can get through the opening chapters with sufficient patience, he will find himself amply repaid by the wonder of the narrative that is awaiting him.



The man who builds up a reputation as a humorist is likely to find himself reduced to desperate straits to maintain it. And if he gets into difficulty over it he is deprived of the sympathy usually extended to the unfortunate, for people want to be amused and entertained and are resentful if their expectations are disappointed.

O. Henry is among the lucky ones. Any anticipations that he stimulates he always satisfies. His short stories, many of which have appeared in *AINSLIE'S*, have never failed of their mark. Some of them, notably "While the Auto Waits," have been models of short-story writing, to say nothing of the flavor of genuine humor they contain.

His first book, "Cabbages and

"Kings," McClure's, loses nothing by comparison, in humor, with his previously published tales. Even the title is full of suggestiveness, though we have, indeed, known some people who failed to see anything funny in "Alice in Wonderland"—a fact, by the way, which is by no means the least fun-provoking quality of Lewis Carroll.

The nonsense in "Cabbages and Kings" is too spontaneous to be the result of premeditation, and so we are not inclined to believe that O. Henry has consciously followed any rule. Nevertheless, he has profited by his evident knowledge of the results of encounters between incongruous elements by mixing his stolid, practical Anglo-Saxons with volatile, theatrical, Latin South Americans.

While the author has sensibly refrained from the construction of an elaborate plot, there is no lack of continuity in his story. There is a single thread throughout, and the connection is by no means as slender as might be inferred from this figure of speech. In the first chapter a certain problem is presented by two defaulting officials, one the president of a South American republic and the other the president of a North American corporation—characters well and unfavorably known on both continents; known separately but not in combination, hence the art of the humorist in involving them in one net.

The solution of the problem is held in suspense until the last chapter. In the interval the comedy proceeds merrily. It is by no means a side-splitting and rib-breaking burlesque, but a genuine comedy, that gives one a good laugh without leaving him with an uneasy sense of having made a fool of himself.



It occasionally happens that the merits of a novel must be judged solely by the impressions produced by a single character. Whether that character is one of such strength as to dominate a genuine plot or because he or she is simply made the center of a series of incidents is a matter of no importance.

James Branch Cabell's book, "The Eagle's Shadow," Doubleday, Page & Co., is such a novel. Whether one likes her or not, it must be admitted that the personality of Margaret Hugonin makes the whole story. She is distinctly the sort of person who commands devoted friendship or provokes open hostility; even were she not an heiress, one could not be indifferent to her.

In all probability, with most women her unpopularity will be pronounced, for she belongs to that class of her sex whose femininity is emphasized by a spirit of willful contradiction and the capacity to assume, when the occasion seems to require it, an appearance of contrite dependence. Both of these phases may or may not be real; the average man undoubtedly wants to believe them so, and the average woman as certainly professes complete skepticism concerning them.

But with all her inconsistencies, she is a very charming personality. She is high-bred and high-spirited, and to the latter, combined with her youth, may, in charity, be attributed some of the unconventionalities of speech and action with which an unfriendly critic will be inclined to tax her. Age and experience and a happy marriage will work wonders with such material. The first two she is sure of, if she lives, and Fred seems to be just the sort of man to supply the last.

Excepting the colonel, the other characters in the book seem a bit unreal and perhaps overdrawn, but they neither add to nor detract from the portrait of Margaret.



One of Bobbs-Merrill's best books is "Zelda Dameron," by Meredith Nicholson, whose previous story, "The Main Chance," is still a very pleasant recollection.

The story is somewhat suggestive of Brand Whitlock's "The Happy Average," not so much because of any similarity in plot as because of the manner in which both authors have realized the atmosphere of the town in the Middle West.

The heroine of the story, who contributes her name as the title of the book, is a young woman of considerable strength of character, but withal of a very lovable disposition. After having been educated abroad, she comes back to her native town, which she left when she was too young to appreciate the peculiar conditions existing in her family, to find her father reputed to be a wealthy man, but intensely unpopular because of his miserly habits. In spite of this fact, however, and in the face of the protests of a brother and sister of her mother, who is dead, she insists upon making her home with Mr. Dameron. The difficulties and unhappiness that this decision entails serve to make the plot as well as to develop the strong points of her character. A pretty love story which is woven into the tale relieves its dark places.

There is just the right degree of action, and some good dramatic situations are evolved, which, with the effective character drawing, make an altogether interesting story.



Above all else a study of character is Mrs. Anne Douglas Sedgwick's book, "Paths of Judgment," Century Company. There is very little in the plot to arrest attention so far as the element of novelty is concerned, for it is a very familiar story of a man's utter unworthiness of the love bestowed upon him by a woman who deserves a better fate.

Maurice Wynne is one of a type, and of a type altogether too common. He is a man of an unquestionably lovable disposition, of much more than ordinary talent and with impulses always laudable, but destitute of the will power to turn his gifts to account, either for his own benefit or for that of those others who have the right to demand it of him; and, of course, as a necessary consequence, he is a coward.

Such a man, involved in the affections of two women, naturally effects a catastrophe.

The most interesting feature of the story is the account of the manner in which Felicia Merrick is by slow de-

grees prepared for her revolt when the disclosure of her husband's contemptible conduct is finally made by Lady Angela. Her discovery that she despises her husband and loves his friend produces no strain upon the reader's credulity.

Lady Angela, who, for the most part, believes that her motives are wholly altruistic, also experiences a self-revelation, and finds that she not only hates, but is capable of revenge.

The final scene between Felicia and Geoffrey Daunt does not seem to us to have quite the ring of truth, and their dialogue and the situation in Maurice's room at the conclusion smacks just a little of melodrama.



One of the holiday season gift books from the press of McClure, Phillips & Co. is a little story by Frances Hodgson Burnett, which she calls "In the Closed Room." It is, however, something besides what we are accustomed to regard as gift books, which usually consist of little more than pretentious bindings and decorated pages, of little value beyond their use as ornaments for drawing-room tables.

In addition to its being a good story of its type, it has, as might be expected, coming from the pen of Mrs. Burnett, genuine literary merit; this, too, in spite of its improbability from the point of view of fiction.

Its chief interest to the critic lies in its excellent characterization. For this purpose we may discard entirely the supernatural element, which is an incident in the psychic peculiarities of little Judith Foster, for without it the story could have been made as finished a piece of work and, to many minds, much more convincing.

The plain, matter-of-fact father and mother, and the frail, imaginative child whom they adored but did not understand, present a contrast full of possibilities sufficiently absorbing and pathetic without surrounding them with an atmosphere very much like that of a modern ghost story.

There is much vigor of action and much picturesque descriptive writing in Emerson Hough's latest book, "The Law of the Land," Bobbs-Merrill Co. Mr. Hough manifestly set out to write an intensely interesting book, and beyond all doubt he has succeeded.

There is a reasonably large and emotionally competent cast of characters whose interests center chiefly about the locality of the Yazoo Delta. Colonel Calvin Blount is perhaps the most prominent, an old-fashioned Southerner, whose language is always direct and expressive, and whose tendency is to unexpected gun plays. Henry Decherd is the villain, a man who makes no concealment of his character, from his first appearance. The complications of the plot, which begin to develop in chapter two, are finally straightened out by John Eddring, who captures the reader's sympathy at once.

Of course, the feminine element holds its own, and equally of course, it is consistently illogical from beginning to end.

It is a distinctly moving and readable story, and its only defect, if, indeed, it is a defect, is its somewhat inconclusive ending.



Another effective child story is Gouverneur Morris' delightful little tale of "Ellen and Mr. Man," Century Company.

Mr. Man is not so mature as his sobriquet suggests, but a very engaging youngster of ten years, who, as he himself says in this autobiography, was his own master from the time he could walk. His self-proprietorship was due to the fact that he was obliged to make his home, such as it was, with a good-for-nothing, happy-go-lucky kind of a father, who had been cast off by his own family.

Up to the period of his first meet-

ing with Ellen, his education had been directed entirely by himself, and one of his accomplishments was the collection of butterflies. This fact finally brought about a complete change in his mode of life. As he himself puts it, he was led astray by a butterfly; an unfortunate way of putting it, as the phrase is usually interpreted to mean a journey along the road that leadeth to destruction; whereas, in his case, the pursuit of the butterfly resulted in the turning of his footsteps in the opposite direction. For he was introduced to Ellen, who turned out to be a very delightful aunt, a sister of his father, and he was finally welcomed into his grandfather's household and subjected to civilizing processes.

After this happened, a very charming companionship was established between the boy and his young aunt, which existed unimpaired until she met her fate in the person of a young Frenchman, who seems almost too Anglo-Saxon to be true. It might have lasted even longer if Mr. Man had not been assured that his aunt's honeymoon was expected to last forever, a fact which forced him to resume his self-mastery.



A book that will be of some value to a good many busy people is "Safe Methods, or How to do Business," compiled by E. T. Roe and published by Hertel, Jenkins & Co.

It gives in compact form a mass of information so arranged as to make it, with the assistance of a very full index and a business dictionary, easily accessible. There is also a large supply of business and legal forms, which, if used with discrimination, will prove of considerable value.

But this, like other books of the kind, must not be followed slavishly, if trouble is to be avoided.

